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23 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
24 FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
25 SAN FRANCISCO DIVISION

26 AMERICAN FEDERATION OF
27 GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO, et
28 al.,

Plaintiffs,

v.

DONALD J. TRUMP, in his official capacity
as President of the United States, et al.,

Defendants.

Case No. 3:25-cv-03698-SI

DECLARATION OF RICH COUTURE

DECLARATION OF RICH COUTURE

I, Rich Couture, declare as follows:

1. I am over 18 years of age and competent to give this declaration. This declaration is based on my personal knowledge, information, and belief. I am providing this declaration as a Union officer.

2. I am a Senior Attorney Advisor at the Social Security Administration (“SSA”). I have worked at the SSA since September 8, 2002. I began as a Claims Specialist in a field office. In December 2013, I moved to the Office of Hearings Operations (“OHO”) as an Attorney Advisor. In October 2016, I became a Senior Attorney Advisor. I have worked at SSA for the past 22 years. In my role as Senior Attorney Advisor, I assist SSA Administrative Law Judges with complex legal issues and help ensure the decisions follow laws, regulations, and rules, and I assist with the pre-hearing case reviews.

3. I am a member of the American Federation of Government Employees Council 215 (“Council 215” or “Union”), and I serve as the Council 215 President. Council 215, along with five other AFGE Councils, which represent about 40,000 SSA employees total in various positions, constitute the General Committee, which negotiates employment terms and conditions with the SSA. I am the current Spokesperson for the General Committee. As the Spokesperson, I have had biweekly meetings with Leland Dudek. The meetings usually last about 30 minutes.

4. Council 215 represents a bargaining unit of approximately 4,000 civil servant employees who work in SSA’s hearings and appeals in hearing offices throughout the United States. These employees include Attorney Advisors, Paralegal Specialists, Legal Assistants, and others in the SSA OHO and Office of Appellate Operations offices throughout the nation. These bargaining unit members assist the public by ensuring their hearing and appeal rights are met.

5. Council 215’s and the General Committee’s mission is to advocate for and promote the interests of bargaining unit members in their federal employment. As the exclusive bargaining representative of these workers, the Union provides many services to all bargaining unit members. Core functions of the Union include collective bargaining with the SSA to obtain a fair and reasonable collective bargaining agreement (“CBA”); requesting information and bargaining if the

1 SSA wants to alter the CBA or to change conditions midterm; filing and presenting grievances
2 against the SSA to enforce the terms and conditions of the CBA; pursuing arbitrations on behalf of
3 workers to enforce the CBA; and providing other support, guidance, and resources to bargaining
4 unit employees.

5 6. The Union first became aware of President Trump's plan to conduct "large-scale"
6 Reductions In Force ("RIF") and agency reorganization through the February 11, 2025 Executive
7 Order ("EO"). No one from SSA had said anything about large-scale RIFs to the Union prior to
8 that EO.

9 7. On February 26, 2025, Laurel Perez, from SSA Center for Negotiations and
10 Dispute Resolution, provided the Union with formal notice of its dissolution of the Office of
11 Analytics, Review, and Oversight (OARO) by reorganizing subcomponents in the following
12 manner:

- 13 • The Office of Appellate Operations and the Office of Quality Review (OQR) will move
14 to the Office of Hearings Operations;
- 15 • The Office of Program Integrity will merge with the Office of Financial Policy and
16 Operations to form the Office of Financial Policy and Program Integrity in the Office of
17 Budget, Finance, and Management;
- 18 • The Office of Analytics and Improvements and the Chief Data Officer will move to the
19 Office of the Chief Information Officer; and
- 20 • The Audit Liaison Staff will move to the Office of Communications (OCOMM).

21 A true and correct copy of the February 26 memo is attached hereto as Exhibit A. The February
22 26 notice did not inform the Union of the scope of the changes and what impact there would be on
23 AFGE bargaining unit employees.

24 8. On February 27, 2025, all SSA employees were sent an email that announced the
25 Agency "will soon implement agency-wide organizational restructuring that will include significant
26 workforce reductions" ("Reorganization Plan"). A true and correct copy of the February 27
27 Reorganization Plan email is attached hereto as Exhibit B. The email introduced various
28 voluntary resignation options for SSA employees after explaining the "massive reorganizations"

1 that were to come: “offices that perform functions not mandated by statute may be prioritized for
2 reduction-in-force actions that could include abolishment of organizations and positions, directed
3 reassignments, and reductions in staffing.” SSA threatened that it “may reassign employees from
4 non-mission critical positions to mission critical direct service positions (e.g., field offices,
5 teleservice centers, processing centers).” These reassignments could be “involuntary” and
6 “require retraining for new workloads.”

7 9. On February 28, 2025, the SSA issued a Press Release that announced it had set a
8 goal of reducing SSA’s staff of 57,000 employees down to 50,000 employees. The SSA also said
9 it did not know when the RIF would take place. This Press Release announcing a massive RIF
10 began: “Consistent with recent executive orders issued by the White House.” I understood the
11 Press Release to be referring to the February 11, 2025 EO. A true and correct copy of the
12 February 28 Press Release is attached hereto as Exhibit C.

13 10. Also, on February 28, 2025, Acting Commissioner Leland Dudek sent Senior Staff
14 a memo, which I also received and this is how the Union learned that SSA was implementing a
15 major reorganization of the regional offices by consolidating SSA’s 10 regional offices into four
16 offices. Before identifying the below reorganization, Commissioner Dudek gave credit for this
17 reorganization to “support President Trump’s priorities to streamline functions”:

18 (1) New Northeast Region would be created from the current Boston, New York and
19 Philadelphia regions

20 (2) New Southeast Region would be created from the current Atlanta region

21 (3) New Mid-West/West Region would be created from the current Chicago, Kansas City,
22 Denver and Seattle regions

23 (4) Southwest Region would be created from the current Dallas and San Francisco regions.

24 A true and correct copy of this February 28 memo is attached hereto as Exhibit D. On March 3,
25 2025, by email to HR, I expressed the Union’s serious concerns from the employees in the current
26 regions, asking if SSA will maintain current office space and if any changes will be made to work
27 assignments.

1 Further, on February 28, 2025, as Spokesperson, I emailed Labor Relations with a information
2 request for, among other things, “which offices the Agency [h]as determined perform functions
3 not mandated by statute, which functions are not mandated by statute, and which statutes the
4 Agency relied upon in making these determinations”; the SSA’s “plan to be submitted to OPM”,
5 and “which positions the Agency has determined to be non-mission critical, as well as which
6 positions are determined to be mission critical.” On March 4, 2025, I received an email from
7 Maureen Broidrick, who is a Director in the Office of Labor Management & Employee Relations,
8 stating “I am in recei[pt] of your email below [from February 28], as well as your email from
9 March 3, 2025 (OARO Reorganizations; HQ and RO Reorganization; Potential RIFs and other
10 actions). I will provide a response once I’ve had an opportunity to review both further. In the
11 meantime, please contact me if you have any questions.”

12 11. On March 26, 2025, I received an email from Charles Ott, HR Specialist,. Attached
13 to that email were emails that had already been sent out to all SSA email addresses, which I had
14 already seen, as well as a template email indicating that an SSA employee’s request for the
15 Voluntary Separation Incentive Program had been approved. Mr. Ott did not provide me with the
16 information I had requested, including information about which offices the Agency had
17 determined performed functions not mandated by statute and the SSA’s reorganization and RIF
18 plan to be submitted to OPM.

19 12. On April 3, 2025, Acting Commissioner Dudek emailed all SSA employees
20 releasing “SSA’s 3-Month Action Plan” offering all SSA employees the option to move to “direct
21 service/mission critical roles”, and after these “voluntary reassignments” are completed, SSA is
22 “proceeding with plans that may include abolishment of organizations and positions, directed
23 reassignments, and reductions in force (RIF).” After explaining what a directed reassignment
24 entailed, Commissioner Dudek stated: “We are offering you a final opportunity to voluntarily
25 request reassignment to a direct service/mission crucial role before we make further organizational
26 changes.”

27 13. On April 4, 2025, a news article stating that SSA would cut even more jobs than
28 the number required to get to the 50,000 goal was published in The Washington Post. A true and

1 correct copy of the article is attached hereto as Exhibit E. In the article, I read that “DOGE
2 determined that the 7,000 jobs eliminated since February under acting commissioner Leland
3 Dudek through early retirements, buyouts, resignations and firings were not enough, the officials
4 said.” According to Post article, an SSA official had told the newspaper that in recent days SSA
5 “leaders were notified that they needed to propose a ‘more extensive RIF proposal.’ It also said
6 that there would be cuts to Information Technology employees: “The DOGE team . . . asked for
7 staff reductions to broad areas of operation, including communications, personnel, legislative and
8 congressional affairs, retirement and disability policy, and other ‘support components’[, including]
9 the information technology department of about 4,000 employees, which is confronting a flurry of
10 website crashes that has shut out customers from accessing their benefit information[, where u]p to
11 800 people could be laid off in that department[.]” The article stated that that “[d]ozens of field
12 offices from Clinton, South Carolina, to San Antonio will lose more than a quarter of their staffs,
13 according to recent data published on the Social Security website.” None of this information had
14 been communicated to me or anyone else at the Union by SSA.

15 14. On April 8, 2025, the New York Times published an article about the SSA cuts.
16 The newspaper reported that “calls to the agency have risen by 30 percent compared with last
17 year, and more callers are getting busy signals or being disconnected, according to data published
18 by Social Security.” A true and correct copy of the April 8 Times article is attached hereto as
19 Exhibit F. Consistent with my understanding of the SSA workforce at the beginning of the year,
20 the article stated that “[s]taffing levels at the Social Security Administration were already at 50-
21 year lows.” Exhibit F at page 3. The article continued that “the departure of so many workers
22 who answered phones and worked at field office counters has led to longer lines and phone waits,
23 according to interviews with more than a dozen internal field office and high-level employees.”
24 Exhibit F at page 3. I have heard that wait times have increased since staff have started resigning
25 after the EO. The article also stated that around 2,800 SSA employees “have taken buyouts or
26 early retirements promoted by Mr. Musk’s group, according to agency data.” Exhibit F at page 3.
27 I have heard that around 2,600 people applied for the options and only 2,000 were eligible,
28

1 indicating that likely at least or more 5,000 SSA employees could receive a RIF notice in the near
2 future.

3 15. Even at 57,000 employees, SSA was already at a 50-year staffing low, with long
4 wait times on the 800 number and service delays in getting appointments at the field offices. All
5 negative trends in provision of services are now on the rise, due to the impact of those who
6 selected resignation options in March. I recently looked at the SSA website for 800 number
7 performance data through March 2025. A true and correct copy of the SSA 800 number
8 performance data is attached hereto as Exhibit G. The average call wait time has increased from
9 61 minutes to 90 minutes. Exhibit G at page 4.

10 16. I also looked at the SSA website for Processing time for Retirement, Survivor, and
11 Medicare benefits data through March 2025. A true and correct copy of the Processing time for
12 Retirement, Survivor, and Medicare benefits data is attached hereto as Exhibit H. I saw that only
13 84% of claims are processed timely. Exhibit H at page 1. Also, only 43% of people are receiving
14 benefits appointments within 28 days, down from 85% in 2020. Exhibit H at page 4. The gap
15 between claims received and claims processed grew to nearly 100,000 in March 2025. Exhibit H
16 at page 2. This represents a growing backlog of cases. The number of benefits claims pending
17 (i.e., not yet processed) increased from 346,277 in 2024 to 594,983 in the first months of 2025.
18 Exhibit H at page 3.

19 17. I also looked at the SSA website for disability benefits determination processing
20 time. A true and correct copy of the disability benefits data is attached hereto as Exhibit I. The
21 data shows that disability determination average processing time nearly doubled, growing from
22 120 days in 2019 to 232 days in 2025. Exhibit I at page 2. The initial disability determinations
23 pending – meaning they are awaiting processing and resolution – increased from around 590,000
24 in 2019 to 1,030,000 in 2025. Exhibit I at page 3.

25 18. On April 21, 2025, HR offered a second chance to SSA employees to opt for the
26 deferred retirement/resignation program, where “Headquarters employees in a non-mission critical
27 position” have until April 25 at noon to take it. A true and correct copy of the April 21 email is
28 attached hereto as Exhibit J.

1 19. The Reorganization Plan impacts every aspect of the Agency. While originally
2 field office employees were exempted, field office employees have selected the resignation
3 options. Many of these field office employees were experienced. Because I started as a claims
4 specialist in a SSA field office and worked in that role for 11 years, I know that it takes about five
5 years until a claims representative really understands the job and can process claims efficiently,
6 and in their place are thousands of people from the back office coming to front-facing positions.
7 For example, if I went back to that job, I would need significant retraining because I have not
8 processed claims for over ten years. The classroom education process lasts about a year, and then
9 there is a two to three year career ladder training process to become a journey person to process
10 claims. So it will take at least three years before any replacements will be able to process claims
11 with the efficiency of those they replaced. Meanwhile, the staff who remain will be slowed down
12 as they will need to train their new colleagues who have replaced their experienced colleagues.
13 Also, prior to the reorganization, SSA had hundreds of employees, such as IT and HR employees,
14 providing behind the scenes support to field office claims specialists and field office managers,
15 and those employees are being reassigned to the front office positions to process claims and their
16 IT and HR roles are not being backfilled. But front offices will not be able to operate as
17 efficiently without that critical support.

18 20. With reduced staff at SSA Headquarters it will take longer to get an appointment or
19 have a call answered because of the loss of support to frontline offices. With fewer experienced
20 staff, benefits will take longer to process, and it will take longer for social security beneficiaries to
21 receive benefits. If IT staff receive RIF notices at the same time as beneficiaries are encouraged to
22 go to the SSA website, the website is likely to continue to crash and it will take longer to correct
23 the problems with reduced staff to address it. Similarly, internal IT systems that SSA employees
24 use to process claims and related workloads will be prone to more frequent and severe outages and
25 crashes. SSA is already not timely processing all applications, according to its own website data,
26 and those delays will only get worse if the Agency's workforce is reduced even by another 5,000
27 employees, or around 10%.

1 21. We anticipate that thousands of union members and represented employees will be
2 impacted by the RIF notices that are expected to come any day, and all union members and
3 represented employees who remain will be impacted by the demands of training back-office staff,
4 an increased caseload from the staff cuts, relocation from office closures, and reduced staff to
5 provide support from the back-office reductions.

6 22. Based on the April press reports and the information available on the SSA's
7 website about processing times, the Agency will not be able to meet statutory deadlines to process
8 benefits. Retirees, disabled people, and those entitled to survivor benefits will take longer to
9 receive benefits and it will take longer to correct errors to benefits. Given all the uncertainty
10 around benefits, the Agency will continue to see an increase in phone calls and field office visits,
11 further increasing the workload as well as the wait time and appointment availability.

12 23. The Reorganization Plan is also having an immediate adverse effect on the Union's
13 ability to provide core services to unit members and to accomplish its mission. All AFGE officers
14 are receiving an enormous number of questions from members, and it takes nearly all of our free
15 time to answer those questions. We will get even more questions when 5,000 SSA employees
16 receive RIF notices. Not only are we losing members and their dues from the resignations, but we
17 have increased Union work because of the lack of transparency about who, if anyone, from within
18 the Agency will be protected from the RIF, when a RIF may occur, and how the remaining staff
19 will be able to meet the SSA beneficiaries' inquiries.

20 24. I have worked in the SSA since 2002 and have experience with prior government
21 shutdowns in October 2013 and December 2018-January 2019. The planned reorganization and
22 RIF will take services to worse than shutdown levels in terms of processing claims. During prior
23 shutdowns, the vast majority of the workforce (all claims specialists, 800 number workers, hearing
24 and appeals office employees) were exempt from the shutdown and continued to work without pay
25 during the shutdown. Social security, Medicare, and disability claims continued to be processed
26 as regular course without measurable delay based on the Agency's metrics for processing as
27 discussed earlier in Paragraphs 15-17. So by and large the claims continued without noticeable
28 change from the public's perspective. While in January of this year, it briefly appeared that at

1 least field office employees would be spared, it is now clear that field offices have already been
2 gutted, losing 2,000 experienced workers—including from field offices—due to voluntary
3 separation agreements, and still thousands of more positions will receive RIF notices. This means
4 that SSA benefits will be processed at even slower rates than during those previous shutdowns.

5 25. If the Reorganization Plan were published in the Federal Register for notice and
6 comment, the Union would provide extensive comments during the public comment period. As a
7 preliminary matter, it means we would know with certainty where the Agency was proposing to
8 make cuts. These cuts expected at SSA will be devastating for the Agency, which is already at 50-
9 year low staffing levels, just as the majority of the Baby Boomer generation receive retirement
10 benefits. If the Reorganization Plan were published, the Union would take the time to explain in
11 detail the devastating impact of the reorganization and RIFs on beneficiaries as well as the
12 impossible workload for the reduced and demoralized staff. In fact, SSA just last year in March
13 2024 studied the impact of the lowest staff in 50 years coinciding with increasing benefits claims
14 as we come to the anticipated height of the baby boomer generation retiring. The study showed
15 that SSA staff had already fallen from a peak of 66,967 full time employees in fiscal year 2010 to
16 55,012 employees in fiscal year 2024, while the beneficiaries and recipients increased from around
17 60,000,000 to around 75,000,000 in that same period. The Agency had higher staffing levels in
18 both the 2013 and 2018-19 shutdowns than today. Exhibit K at page 2. The SSA noted a 10%
19 attrition in the field office staff and a 22% attrition in the 800-number staff. That staff attrition led
20 to a wait time on the 800-number being an average of 38 minutes, and initial disability decisions at
21 228 days. Exhibit K at page 4. The SSA estimated that with a mere 1.2% budget increase, the
22 wait time on the 800-number could go down to five minutes and the initial disability determination
23 could go down to 120 days. Exhibit K at page 5.

24 26. Instead of staffing up to meet the baby boomer demands, the SSA's actions since
25 the February 11 EO have led to trained staff exiting the Agency, already with increased wait time
26 on the 800 number and delays in initial disability determinations. While a modest 1.2% increase
27 could dramatically improve wait times, the opposite is also true, reducing the workforce by more
28 than ten percent will vastly increase wait times on the 800-number and extend initial disability

1 determinations out well past a year. So people who are unable to work due to a disability and
2 entitled to benefits under law will be effectively cut off from receiving those benefits for a very
3 long time because the reorganization and major RIFs will mean there will not be sufficient staffing
4 to timely process those applications.

5 27. The Union's staff and activities are funded through members' voluntary dues. If
6 the Union no longer receives dues from the thousands of members who will receive RIF notices
7 and will assist them through the RIF process, that will make it significantly more difficult for the
8 Union to continue to function and to provide the services and protection to its members.

9 I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States that the foregoing is
10 true and correct. Executed May 1, 2025, in Worcester, Massachusetts



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12 Rich Couture
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Exhibit A



SOCIAL SECURITY

MEMORANDUM

C-2025-000521

Date: February 26, 2025

To: Richard Couture
AFGE General Committee Spokesperson
1441 Main Street, Suite 450
Springfield, MA 01103
By email only: Richard.Couture@ssa.gov

On February 21, 2025, the Acting Commissioner, Leland Dudek, announced restructuring of the components of the Office of Analytics, Review, and Oversight (OARO) to align mission critical workload components together to focus on mission operations results. Effective immediately, OARO is in the process of redistributing its responsibilities across existing departments, as stated below:

- The Office of Appellate Operations and the Office of Quality Review (OQR) will move to the Office of Hearings Operations;
- The Office of Program Integrity will merge with the Office of Financial Policy and Operations to form the Office of Financial Policy and Program Integrity in the Office of Budget, Finance, and Management;
- The Office of Analytics and Improvements and the Chief Data Officer will move to the Office of the Chief Information Officer; and
- The Audit Liaison Staff will move to the Office of Communications (OCOMM).

Currently, we do not anticipate any changes to the conditions of employment of bargaining unit employees. Should you identify any greater than *de minimis* impact that is not covered by the National Agreement, please promptly notify me of that in writing.

If you have any questions, please contact me at Laurel.Perez@ssa.gov.

Sincerely,
/s/ Laurel Perez

Center for Negotiations and Dispute Resolution – East
Office of Labor-Management and Employee Relations

Exhibit B

From: ^Human Resources Internal Communications <Human.Resources.Internal.Communications@ssa.gov>

Sent: Thursday, February 27, 2025 5:10 PM

Subject: Organizational Restructuring - Availability of Voluntary Reassignment, Early Out Retirement, and Separation Incentive Payments to ALL ELIGIBLE EMPLOYEES – No Component or Position Exceptions

To: All SSA Employees

Subject: Organizational Restructuring - Availability of Voluntary Reassignment, Early Out Retirement, and Separation Incentive Payments to ALL ELIGIBLE EMPLOYEES – No Component or Position Exceptions

PLEASE READ THIS ENTIRE NOTICE

Supervisors will ensure all employees under their supervision (including those on extended leave) receive this information.

The Social Security Administration (SSA) will soon implement agency-wide organizational restructuring that will include significant workforce reductions. Through these massive reorganizations, offices that perform functions not mandated by statute may be prioritized for reduction-in-force actions that could include abolishment of organizations and positions, directed reassignments, and reductions in staffing. The agency may reassign employees from non-mission critical positions to mission critical direct service positions (e.g., field offices, teleservice centers, processing centers). Reassignments may be involuntary and may require retraining for new workloads.

VOLUNTARY REASSIGNMENTS

Employees interested in voluntarily being reassigned to a mission critical position should indicate their interest here [Reassignment Questionnaire](#) by March 14, 2025.

VOLUNTARY SEPARATION INCENTIVES

Employees who do not wish to undergo the restructuring process may elect to separate from federal service through retirement or resignation. To further support employees considering these options, SSA is offering the following to **ALL EMPLOYEES**:

VOLUNTARY EARLY RETIREMENT (VERA) OR “EARLY OUT”

- **Availability:** VERA is now available to employees in all components and positions, with no exclusions. Please eligibility criteria below.
- **Separation Window:** VERA is available from March 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025. Employees not eligible now or who wish to retire later in the year under early out may do so, but may be subject to restructuring activities. Employees who are not yet eligible for voluntary early retirement, but who would like to apply later in the calendar year should alert management of their intent to do so and work with their servicing benefits specialists to process their cases as their dates become due. **All eligible employees taking early retirement must separate by December 31, 2025.**
- **Eligibility:** To be eligible for early out, employees must:
 - Have 20 years of creditable service and be at least 50 years of age or have at least 25 years of creditable service at any age (this must include 5 years of civilian service).
 - Must be serving under a non-time-limited appointment
 - Have been continuously on SSA's rolls at least 30 days prior to January 17, 2025
 - Cannot be in receipt of an involuntary separation decision for misconduct or unsatisfactory performance.
- **Note:** Retirement may affect your Federal Health Insurance eligibility. Please contact your Servicing Personnel Office (SPO) with questions.

VOLUNTARY SEPARATION INCENTIVE PAYMENTS (VSIP)

- **Availability:** VSIP will be available until **noon EST on March 14** to all employees electing to separate from service across all components and positions agencywide. VSIP is limited and available on a first come basis. VSIP may be paid for an optional retirement (full retirement age), voluntary early retirement (VERA), or resignation. VSIP is **not** available to employees who are participating in the Deferred Resignation Program.
- **Eligibility:**
 - Employees must:
 - Be serving in an appointment without time limit;

- Be currently employed by the Executive Branch of the Federal Government for a continuous period of at least 3 years;
 - Be serving in a position covered by an agency VSIP plan (all SSA employees are covered in the agency plan);
 - Apply for and receive approval for a VSIP from the agency making the VSIP offer; and
 - Not be included in any of the ineligibility categories listed below.
- Employees in the following categories are not eligible for a VSIP:
 - Reemployed annuitants;
 - Have a disability such that the individual is or would be eligible for disability retirement;
 - Have received a decision notice of involuntary separation for misconduct or poor performance;
 - Previously received any VSIP from the Federal Government;
 - During the 36-month period preceding the date of separation, performed service for which a student loan repayment benefit was paid, or is to be paid;
 - During the 24-month period preceding the date of separation, performed service for which a recruitment or relocation incentive was paid, or is to be paid; and
 - During the 12-month period preceding the date of separation, performed service for which a retention incentive was paid, or is to be paid.
- **Separation Window:** Employees must opt in by March 14 and separate from the agency no later than April 19, 2025. **Employees may be placed on administrative leave through April 19, 2025.**
 - **How to Sign Up:** Employees must complete the [VSIP Sign Up](#) as soon as possible, but no later than March 14, 2025 noon EST. Please let your manager know immediately if you sign up for VSIP.
 - **Note:** Completing the form does not guarantee VSIP.
 - **Incentive Payment:** Payments will be the following amounts for the grade level of your permanent position. All payments are subject to taxes and normal deductions from income. Employees are strongly encouraged to read the [rules for VSIP payments](#).

Up to GS 8	\$15,000
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GS 9 – 12	\$20,000
GS 13 and up	\$25,000

OPTIONAL RETIREMENT

Employees who have reached their full retirement age may apply for optional retirement at any time. Employees serving under the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) should see the [OPM eligibility information](#) for FERS, which is generally 30 years of service, plus reaching minimum retirement age. Employees serving under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) should refer to the [OPM eligibility information for CSRS](#), which is generally 30 years of service and age 55. Additional provisions and options are available for both FERS and CSRS.

RESIGNATION

Employees may resign from federal service at any time. Employees who resign would be eligible for a payout of their annual leave and may be eligible to apply for a Deferred Retirement when they reach their minimum retirement age. Please see the attached table explaining the differences between resignations and retirements and the benefits that would apply.

OBTAINING FURTHER INFORMATION

General retirement information is available on the [Benefits Portal](#). The Benefits Portal also includes information about accessing the [GRB Platform](#), which provides calculators for computing estimated retirement benefits. We strongly encourage employees to use the retirement calculators in the [GRB Platform](#) to obtain initial annuity estimates and to request an official annuity computation. You may also contact your SPO (listed below) with questions.

SERVICING PERSONNEL OFFICES

Headquarters	^DCHR OPE Retirement 410-965-4522
Office of Central Operations	^DCHR OOHRS OCO EBPB 410-966-9726
Office of Hearings Operations (HQ)	^HQ-FC GRB Requests 703-605-8440

Atlanta Region	<u>^DCHR OOHRs ATL Benefits</u> 404-562-1188
Birmingham Program Service Center and Teleservice Center	<u>^DCHR OOHRs ATL Benefits</u> 205-801-1417
Boston Region	<u>^DCHR OOHRs NY BOS SPO</u> 212-264-4075
Chicago Region	<u>^DCHR OOHRs CHI HRPB</u>
Dallas Region	<u>^DCHR OOHRs DA</u> 214-767-4331
Denver Region	<u>^DCHR OOHRs SEA BEST</u>
Kansas City Region	<u>^DCHR OOHRs KC</u> 816-936-5840
New York Region	<u>^DCHR OOHRs NY BOS SPO</u> 212-264-4075
Philadelphia Region	<u>^DCHR OOHRs PHI Pay Bene</u> 215-597-4937
San Francisco Region	<u>^DCHR OOHRs SF Staffing and Benefits Team</u> 510-970-2770
Seattle Region	<u>^DCHR OOHRs SEA BEST</u>
Wilkes-Barre Direct Operations Center	<u>^DCHR OOHRs OCO EBPB</u> 570-831-1510

Exhibit C

Press Release

Friday, February 28, 2025
For Immediate Release



Mark Hinkle, Press Officer
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News Release

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Security Announces Workforce and Organization Plans

Consistent with recent executive orders issued by the White House, the Social Security Administration will continue to implement efficiencies and reduce costs, with a renewed focus on mission critical work for the American people.

The agency plans to reduce the size of its bloated workforce and organizational structure, with a significant focus on functions and employees who do not directly provide mission critical services. Social Security recently set a staffing target of 50,000, down from the current level of approximately 57,000 employees. Rumor of a 50 percent reduction is false.

Initial steps to reduce the workforce included offering a limited number of employees the opportunity to leave the agency under the Deferred Resignation Program and Voluntary Early Retirement (VERA).

Yesterday, the agency announced to all employees that Social Security would soon implement agency-wide organizational restructuring that will include significant workforce reductions. The announcement includes offering Voluntary Separation Incentive Payments (VSIP) to all employees on a first come first serve basis and expanding VERA to all employees. Both VERA and VSIP require employees to opt in and to separate from the agency by specific dates.

Social Security anticipates that much of the staff reductions needed to reach the target of 50,000 will come from retirement, VSIP, and resignation. Additional reductions will come from reduction-in-force (RIF) actions that could include abolishment of organizations and positions. RIF also can include directed reassignments from one position to another position in the agency. Agencies are required to submit their RIF plans to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) by March 13, 2025. No date has been set when a RIF might begin after OPM approves the plan.

SSA has operated with a regional structure consisting of 10 offices, which is no longer sustainable. The agency will reduce the regional structure in all agency components down to four regions. The organizational structure at Headquarters also is outdated and inefficient. SSA will now have seven Deputy Commissioner level organizations.

These steps prioritize customer service by streamlining redundant layers of management, reducing non-mission critical work, and potential reassignment of employees to customer service positions. Also supporting this priority is looking for efficiencies and other opportunities to reduce costs across all spending categories, including information technology and contractor spending. SSA is committed to ensure this plan has a positive effect on the delivery of Social Security services.

To get more Social Security news, follow the Press Office on X [@SSAPress](#).

Exhibit D



SOCIAL SECURITY

MEMORANDUM

Date: February 28, 2025

Refer To: S7A-4

To: Senior Staff

From: Leland C. Dudek /s/
Acting Commissioner

Subject: Executive Personnel Assignments – INFORMATION

I have several announcements.

The following Senior Staff have announced their separations. I wish all of these dedicated employees the best after their many years of public service:

- Christopher Ferris, Associate Commissioner for Security and Emergency Preparedness, Office of Budget, Finance, and Management
- Joseph Lytle, Deputy Commissioner, Office of Hearings Operations
- Craig Bedard, Deputy Associate Commissioner for Strategy, Learning, and Workforce Development, Office of Human Resources (OHR)
- Kristen Medley-Proctor, Assistant Deputy Commissioner, OHR
- Frank Barry, Deputy Associate Commissioner for Customer Service, Office of Operations (DCO)
- Howard Bowles, Regional Commissioner, Denver/Seattle, DCO
- Rose Mary Buehler, Regional Commissioner, Atlanta, DCO
- Vikash Chhagan, Assistant Regional Commissioner for Management and Operations Support, Seattle, DCO
- Sue Cumming, Deputy Associate Commissioner for Public Service and Operations Support, DCO
- Ray Egan, Regional Commissioner, New York, DCO
- Tonya Freeman, Deputy Regional Commissioner, Kansas City, DCO
- Roderick Hairston, Deputy Associate Commissioner for Electronic Services and Technology, DCO
- Rick Lenoir, Regional Commissioner, Chicago, DCO
- Joe Lopez, Assistant Regional Commissioner for Management and Operations Support, Dallas, DCO
- LeeAnn Stuever, Regional Commissioner, Philadelphia, DCO
- Deon Wilson, Deputy Regional Commissioner, Dallas, DCO

- Timothy Amerson, Deputy Associate Commissioner for Information Security, Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO)
- Stephanie Hall, Senior Advisor, OCIO
- Timothy May, Deputy Associate Commissioner for Information Security, OCIO
- Joseph Stenaka, Executive Advisor for Cybersecurity, OCIO
- Jeremy Weibley, Executive Advisor for IT Transformation, OCIO
- Laura Haltzel, Associate Commissioner for Research, Evaluation, and Statistics, Office of Retirement and Disability Policy
- Dennis Foley, Deputy Associate General Counsel for Program Law, Office of the General Counsel
- Natalie Lu, Senior Advisor

To support President Trump's priorities to streamline functions, I am making the following organizational changes:

Historically, SSA has operated with a regional structure consisting of ten regional offices. We can no longer afford to operate in this fashion. We will reduce the regional structure in all agency components down to four regions as follows:

1. Northeast Region – Current Boston, New York, and Philadelphia regions
2. Southeast Region – Current Atlanta region
3. Mid-West/West Region – Current Chicago, Kansas City, Denver, and Seattle regions
4. Southwest Region – Current Dallas and San Francisco regions

In addition, we have an outdated, inefficient organizational structure at Headquarters, so I am reorganizing Headquarters components. We will now have seven Deputy Commissioner level organizations as follows:

1. Deputy Commissioner for Operations
2. Deputy Commissioner for Disability Adjudication
3. Deputy Commissioner for Mission Support
4. Deputy Commissioner for External Affairs
5. Deputy Commissioner for Legal and Policy
6. Chief Information Officer
7. Chief Actuary

Deputy Commissioner for Operations

Doris Diaz will remain Acting Deputy Commissioner (DC). Delma Cardona is Assistant Deputy Commissioner (ADC), DCO. Sean Balser is Acting ADC, DCO.

Anatoly Shnaider is Regional Commissioner (RC), Northeast Region. Darrell Sheffield is Acting RC, Southeast Region. Linda Kerr-Davis is RC, Mid-West/West Region. Travis Dodson is RC, Southwest Region.

In addition, I am realigning all Processing Centers to report to the Office of Central Operations and all Teleservice Centers to report to the newly formed Office of Telephone Services (OTS). Chris Chapple is AC, OTS and Tiffany Countess is Acting DAC, OTS. I am also merging the Office of

Public Service and Operations Support and the Office of Electronic Services and Technology to form the Office of Analysis, Integration, and Performance Oversight (OAIPPO). Jeremiah Schofield is AC, OAIPPO. Sam Richardson and Karen Girardeau are DACs.

Deputy Commissioner for Disability Adjudication

I am establishing the Office of Disability Adjudication (ODA), which will be comprised of the Offices of Hearings Operations (OHO), Appellate Operations, Disability Determinations (ODD), and Quality Review. Jay Ortis, will serve as the Acting Deputy Commissioner (DC), ODA, concurrently while serving as Acting Chief Administrative Law Judge. Jim Parikh is ADC, ODA. Chad Poist will be ADC, ODA. Hank McKnelly will be AC for the Office of Hearing Operations (OHO). While Chad continues to serve as Acting Deputy Chief of Staff, Hank McKnelly will serve as Acting ADC, ODA. Monique Cephas will be DAC, OHO. Leroy Weeks is the Assistant Associate Commissioner (AAC) for the newly formed Office of Management. James Van Der Schalie will be AC, ODD.

Deputy Commissioner for Mission Support

I am combining our administrative support functions in the Office of Budget, Finance, and Management and the Office of Human Resources to form the Office of Mission Support (OMS). Sean Brune will serve as the Acting DC, OMS. His permanent position will be ADC, OMS, overseeing the Offices of Financial Policy and Program Integrity (OFPPPI), Budget (OB), and Acquisition and Grants. Florence Felix-Lawson will serve as the Chief Human Capital Officer, Chief Administrative Officer, and ADC, OM. Florence will oversee the Offices of Human Resources, and the newly formed Office of Facilities and Security Management (OFSM), which merges the Offices of Facilities and Logistics Management, and Security and Emergency Preparedness. Jennifer Stevenson is AC, Office of Human Resources. Jenni Greenlee is AAC, Lauren Palguta and Mary Ann Jett are Deputy, AACs (DAAC). Dan Callahan is AC, OFSM. Marc Mason is AAC, OFSM, Tim Beavers and Dawn McCrobie are DAACs. Christian Hellie is AC, OFPPPI.

Also in OMS, I am reassigning all agency budget functions and employees to OB. Due to their unique nature, the ODD budget staff will remain with ODD. I am also reassigning all agency facilities and security functions and employees to OFSM.

Deputy Commissioner for External Affairs

To improve our responsiveness to Congress, our stakeholders, and the public, I am merging the Office of Communications (OCOMM) and the Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs (OLCA) to form the Office of External Affairs (OEA). Jeffrey Buckner will serve as Acting DC, OEA. His permanent position will be ADC, OEA/OCOMM. Dustin Brown will serve as Acting ADC, OEA/OLCA. Dawn Bystry will be AC, OCOMM. Erik Hansen is AC, OLCA. Kala Shah, currently the Executive Secretary, will be a Senior Advisor, OEA. Stephen McGraw will be Acting Executive Secretary in the Office of the Commissioner.

Deputy Commissioner for Legal and Policy

To increase our effectiveness in implementing the Administration's priorities, I am merging the Office of the General Counsel, the Office of Retirement and Disability Policy (ORDP), and the Office of Labor Management and Employee Relations (OLMER), to form the Office of Legal and Policy (OLP). Mark Steffensen, currently a Senior Advisor in OC, is Acting DC, OLP and Acting General Counsel. Stephen Evangelista will be the ADC, OLP overseeing Policy. We will soon name an ADC overseeing Legal and OLMER. Susan Wilschke is AC, ODP. Bob Weathers is DAC, ODP.

Jessica Burns MacBride will remain AC in the Office of Income Security Programs (OISP) and Anya Olsen is Acting DAC, OISP. Eddie Taylor is AC, OLMER.

The Office of Research, Evaluation, and Statistics; the Office of Data Exchange, Policy Publications, and International Negotiations; and parts of the Office of Research, Demonstration, and Employment Support will be realigned to the Office of the Chief Information Officer.

Chief Information Officer

Joseph Cunningham, who has been serving as the Acting Deputy, AC for the Office of Information Security (OIS) since December 2024, is the Acting AC, OIS and Acting Chief Information Security Officer (CISO).

Consistent with other organizational changes that I have made to align like mission functions, I am reassigning all agency employees in the IT Specialist (2210) occupational series to OCIO.

Please join me in congratulating our colleagues on their new assignments. I will continue to update you as we move further along with our streamlining efforts, but please know that we will continue to review the agency structure and explore additional consolidations and elimination of redundant functions. I am counting on each of you for your support and continued collaboration during this transition.

Exhibit E

Democracy Dies in Darkness

Social Security faces thousands more job cuts even with service in tailspin

The agency has already seen 7,000 job losses from dramatic cost-cutting efforts by Trump and Musk — even as they promise no benefit reductions.

April 4, 2025



By [Lisa Rein](#)

The Social Security Administration — already reeling from plunging customer service following a rapid downsizing under the Trump administration — is drafting plans to begin layoffs of potentially thousands more employees as soon as next week.

The cuts have been ordered by leaders of Elon Musk's cost-cutting team, the U.S. DOGE Service, which reviewed the agency's plans to shrink its workforce last week, according to four agency officials familiar with the conversations, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the plans. DOGE determined that the 7,000 jobs eliminated since February under acting commissioner Leland Dudek through early retirements, buyouts, resignations and firings were not enough, the officials said.

The DOGE team, which has amassed unprecedented power throughout the federal government, has demanded significantly deeper cuts to ensure that Social Security meets President Donald Trump's goal to shrink federal agencies, officials said.

Trump presidency

Follow [live updates on the Trump administration](#). We're tracking [Trump's progress on campaign promises](#) and [legal challenges to his executive orders and actions](#).



Dudek had told the remaining Social Security workforce of about 50,000 in March that he hoped to avoid layoffs known as reductions in force, or RIFs, altogether. But that changed in recent days, when agency leaders were notified that they needed to propose a “more extensive RIF proposal,” one official said.

The Social Security press office did not respond to a request for comment.

The DOGE team did not provide a specific number of jobs that must be eliminated, officials said, but asked for staff reductions to broad areas of operation, including communications, personnel, legislative and congressional affairs, retirement and disability policy, and other “support components.” Also on the list is the information technology department of about 4,000 employees, which is confronting a flurry of website crashes that has shut out customers from accessing their benefit information. Up to 800 people could be laid off in that department, according to one senior official.

“It’s just cut, cut, cut,” the official said. It is unclear whether Frank Bisignano, Trump’s permanent nominee to run Social Security, would try to halt some of the layoffs after the Senate confirms him as expected, possibly as soon as next week.

Elizabeth Huston, a White House spokeswoman, said in a statement: “With a resounding mandate from the American people, President Trump is moving quickly to fulfill his promise of making the federal government more efficient. He has promised to protect Social Security, and every recipient will continue to receive their benefits.”

Trump and other Republicans have repeatedly pledged no cuts to Social Security — a promise that usually extends only to benefit payments. The administration has otherwise moved ahead with dramatic cuts to staffing and closures of offices, moves that have already significantly damaged customer service. DOGE — which stands for the Department of Government Efficiency — and Trump have said they are focused on eliminating fraud, which is a much rarer problem than they have alleged.

The new round of cuts will hit a Social Security workforce that was stretched thin even before Trump took office in January. The agency is set to lose nearly 2,500 employees to buyouts this month just in its network of 1,200 field offices around the country — about a 10 percent reduction.

Dozens of field offices from Clinton, South Carolina, to San Antonio will lose more than a quarter of their staffs, according to recent data published on the Social Security website. The office in Rochester, Minnesota, will lose 40 percent of its employees; Nevada, Missouri, 57 percent; Alexandria, Minnesota, 50 percent; and Minden, Louisiana, 37 percent. Many of these offices are in rural areas, with the closest Social Security office as far as 100 miles away in some places.

Dudek’s strategy, according to officials, is to reassign as many employees as possible to customer-facing roles from higher-ranking jobs at headquarters in Woodland, Maryland, or at regional offices. Dudek has frequently told his team that he believes the agency has too many employees in support roles with high salaries.

But it is unclear whether those who accept a reassignment will be enough to replenish the departing field staffs, who have years of experience helping customers answer complex questions about Social Security's retirement and disability benefits, handling initial vetting of disability claims and performing many other services. Field offices have struggled in recent months to serve a surge in customers who are unsettled by policy changes initiated by Dudek and DOGE and concerned that the administration — despite the president's denials — could eventually reduce their benefits.

“Trump and DOGE are doubling down on their attacks on Social Security, which will cripple rural field offices in communities like Warrenton and La Grande in Oregon,” Sen. Ron Wyden (Oregon), the top Democrat on the Senate Finance Committee, said in a statement, referring to two offices in his district that have already lost employees. “Field offices are already overwhelmed and understaffed, and deeper cuts to the workforce will guarantee delayed benefits and soaring wait times for Americans who count on Social Security's earned benefits.”

Help us report on DOGE

The Washington Post wants to hear from people with knowledge of DOGE activities at federal agencies. You can contact our reporters by email or Signal encrypted message.

Lisa Rein: lisa.rein@washpost.com or (202) 821-3120 on Signal.

Hannah Natanson: hannah.natanson@washpost.com or (202) 580-5477 on Signal.

Elizabeth Dwoskin: elizabeth.dwoskin@washpost.com or (917) 453-0480 on Signal.

[Read more about how to use Signal and other ways to securely contact The Post.](#)

On Thursday, Social Security employees received an offer from the human resources department for voluntary reassignments to “mission-critical” front-line roles answering phones in call centers, processing claims in field offices and hearing offices, performing quality assurance checks on whether disability claims were properly reviewed and other functions.

“This voluntary reassignment option is a critical opportunity to shape how we deliver essential services and to proactively manage your own career path during this period of organizational change,” read the email, which was obtained by The Washington Post. It was interpreted by many as a warning that declining a transfer could result in a layoff. The email called the offer a “final opportunity ... before we make further organizational changes.”

“We are proceeding with plans that may include abolishment of organizations and positions, directed reassignments, and reductions in force (RIF),” read the email.

New departures from headquarters and regional offices will come on the heels of an exodus of senior officials across the department since Dudek became acting commissioner in mid-February. Top attorneys with knowledge of complex Social Security laws and regulations have resigned or been fired. Technologists have left who had expertise in the agency's myriad computer systems and software applications, including the decades-old programming language known as COBOL, which Musk's team plans to quickly migrate to more modern systems. Executives who tracked customer satisfaction with Social Security services also are gone.

For many employees, a switch to a front-line role would mean a significant demotion that would lead to a lower salary, although they would keep their current salary for up to two years. A reassignment could also mean moving to a job in another state.

“Field offices run very tight,” said Rick Warsinskey, a retired Social Security district manager from Cleveland. “They have to be very efficient. When you get backlogged, the problems cascade and it takes a lot more resources to get people back into shape. We’ve never faced a situation where staffing was this tight.”

What readers are saying

The comments express significant concern and criticism regarding the potential impact of the Social Security Administration's planned layoffs on customer service. Many commenters argue that the layoffs are a strategic move to undermine Social Security, making it less functional... [Show more](#)

This summary is AI-generated. AI can make mistakes and this summary is not a replacement for reading the comments.

Exhibit F

‘Just a Mess’: Staff Cuts, Rushed Changes and Anxiety at Social Security

President Trump promised not to touch Social Security, but as Elon Musk’s team trims staff and plans cuts to phone services, the system is groaning under the pressure.



Listen to this article · 10:18 min [Learn more](#)



By Jack Healy, Alexandra Berzon, Tara Siegel Bernard and Nicholas Nehamas

Jack Healy reported from Glendale, Ariz.; Alexandra Berzon from Los Angeles; Tara Siegel Bernard from New York; and Nicholas Nehamas from Washington, D.C.

April 8, 2025

The line started forming outside the Social Security office in suburban Glendale, Ariz., not long after sunrise, dozens of retirees and people with disabilities, shuffling papers, some leaning on walkers, all anxious to know whether President Trump’s government overhaul had put their safety nets at risk.

When 9 a.m. came, an employee emerged from the building with fliers asking the crowd to come back — once they had scheduled an appointment.

“I’ve called for days!” one woman yelled.

“We came from a long ways away,” said another. Still another let everyone know they had been handed a load of bunk, though she used a more colorful term.

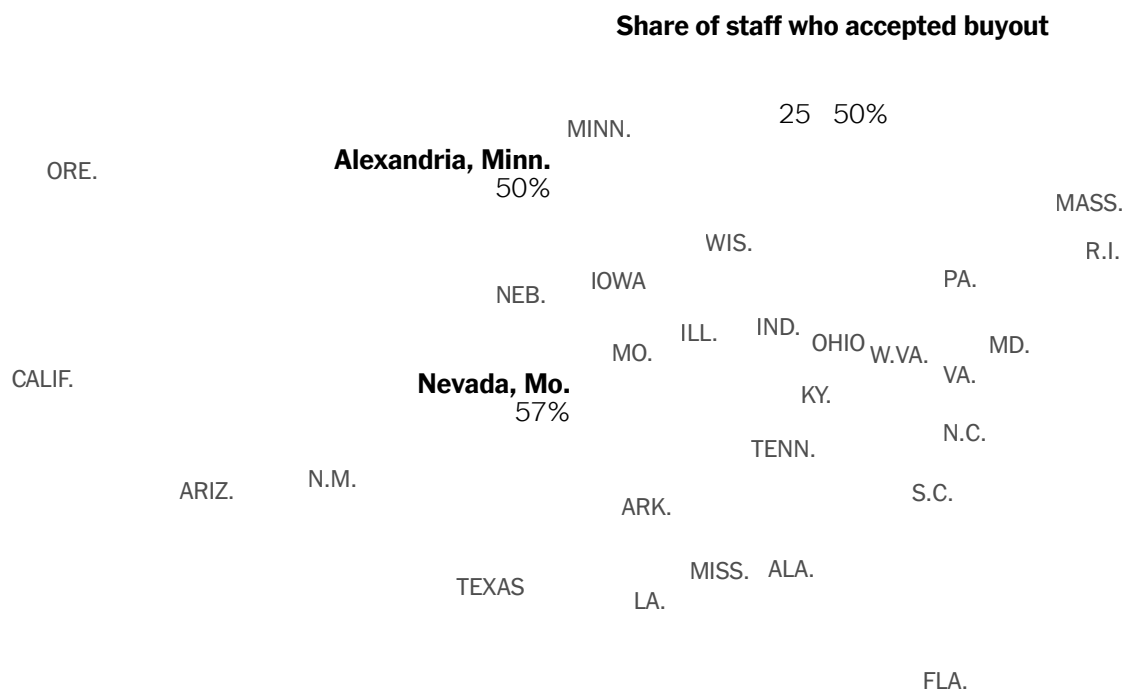
With the stock market in turmoil and the economy under threat, beneficiaries might see their monthly Social Security checks as predictable amid the chaos rippling out of Washington. After all, Mr. Trump has promised not to cut Social Security benefits for the 73 million Americans enrolled.

But that promise has not insulated the Depression-era program once deemed the third rail of American politics. Thousands of worried and frustrated recipients have thronged local field offices, asking why the phone lines are jammed, whether their local offices will be closed by Elon Musk's team of software engineers and technology executives and whether they will lose their benefits.

Waves of buyouts and early retirements have hobbled the staff at many local offices, and recipients say it has become harder to use the agency's website and phone systems, or even be seen in person.

Where field offices are losing more than a quarter of their staff

This map shows only staff members who accepted the one-time buyout offer. It doesn't reflect those who opted into other programs, such as early retirement or deferred resignation.



Source: Social Security Administration • By Zach Levitt

Those difficulties come as a deadline looms, imposed under the influence of Mr. Musk's cost-cutting initiative called the Department of Government Efficiency as the billionaire presidential adviser crusades against what he imagines to be legions of beneficiaries who do not qualify for Social Security benefits. On April 14, the agency plans to largely phase out phone services for people filing for retirement

and survivor benefits or changing their direct deposit information, forcing them to file online or come into the office, part of the administration's broader effort to combat fraud that it has done little to prove exists.

The Social Security Administration could end up exempting some from the edict, but as April 14 approaches, calls to the agency have risen by 30 percent compared with last year, and more callers are getting busy signals or being disconnected, according to data published by Social Security.

"I didn't know he was going to pull this," said Teresa Boswell, whose vote for Mr. Trump in November helped flip Arizona, but who found herself fuming outside the Social Security office in Glendale last week, unable to sign up for \$1,200 in monthly benefits after she retired from her job processing legal papers. "This is a joke."

According to Liz Huston, a spokeswoman for the White House, "President Trump has made it clear that he is committed to making the federal government more efficient without compromising mission-critical operations. He has promised to protect Social Security, and every recipient will continue to receive their benefits."

The Social Security Administration did not respond to a request for comment.

The problems roiling the Social Security system stem from two of the Trump administration's central obsessions: slashing federal payrolls as quickly as possible and rooting out fraud in the federal government.

About 2,800 Social Security employees have taken buyouts or early retirements promoted by Mr. Musk's group, according to agency data.

Staffing levels at the Social Security Administration were already at 50-year lows, and the departure of so many workers who answered phones and worked at field-office counters has led to longer lines and phone waits, according to interviews with more than a dozen internal field office and high-level employees.

In the small town of Wisconsin Rapids, the field office is losing seven employees, more than half of its 11-person staff.

“They lost a good portion of the people that do the most complicated work,” said Greg Bachinski, an official with the local unit of the federal workers union.

All told, more than three dozen offices are losing at least a quarter of their employees, with many located in rural areas that supported Mr. Trump, according to the agency.

Are you a federal worker? We want to hear from you.

The Times would like to hear about your experience as a federal worker under the second Trump administration. We may reach out about your submission, but we will not publish any part of your response without contacting you first.

[Continue »](#)

Further job cuts are likely: The Social Security Administration has said it wants to shed 7,000 of its 57,000 employees, with the additional cuts coming from headquarters. Mr. Musk’s team is pushing to cut departments that perform key services like technology support by 50 percent or more, according to people familiar with the matter.

At the same time, the intense focus by Mr. Musk’s team on weeding out fraud within Social Security — while top administration officials continue to circulate misinformation about fraud levels — has led to policy announcements that have caused beneficiaries to worry they might lose access to the system or have their benefits cut.

Reducing fraud, particularly involving direct deposits, has long been a focus at the agency, with teams working on minimizing the consequences and costs of scams. But the problems reported have been small in scale compared to the size of the agency and total payments made.

The April 14 requirement for online applications does not apply to people seeking disability benefits, Supplemental Security Income, or Medicare. But many seeking benefits have no clear understanding of what is happening or what is being asked of them.

The White House has grown worried enough about the political fallout from the long lines and wait times that White House officials are pressuring Social Security administrators to reduce the information they put online that could draw attention to problems, according to a person briefed on the discussions.

But increasingly, the public knows about the issues. Virender Kanwal, a biology professor in New Jersey, applied for retirement benefits online at the end of February, a few months before her 70th birthday. She said she knew she would have to provide proof of her citizenship to complete the process but did not want to risk mailing in her passport, so she planned to visit a field office. To do so, she needed an appointment, and those need to be secured over the phone.

Ms. Kanwal said she called daily for weeks but never got through. Each time, a recorded message said there was a two-hour wait and to call back later, and the call disconnected. Then she received a letter in late March saying her application would be denied if she did not provide her documents within 12 days.

She began calling every few minutes, and said she was eventually placed on hold for six and a half hours before an agent finally answered just before midnight and gave her an appointment.

“This is not what we expect from our country,” Ms. Kanwal said.

In Poughkeepsie, N.Y., a 90-year-old man using a walker came to a field office because he thought he had to prove he was still alive. In Clinton, S.C., a woman with one leg fell down in the parking lot after coming into the office to show her identification.

In Southern California, older people with disabilities are spending hours taking public buses to get to Social Security offices only to be turned away, nonprofit groups said.

“People just don’t know what’s going to happen,” said Bob Kelley, founder of the San Diego Seniors Foundation. “Everything is up in the air, so it’s just confusion right now.”

Some services offered on the agency's website have also been crashing more often because a new anti-fraud measure has overloaded the servers, according to employees briefed on the matter.

Jessica LaPointe, president of the American Federation of Government Employees Council 220, which represents agency workers nationwide, said system outages were common, but that "it is unusual that they are happening at this frequency." To be sure, the technical systems the offices use are old and complex, and employees experienced periodic outages in the past, but the current changes have been far more disruptive, according to employees and advocates.

The agency has tried to address longer lines and phone waits by giving workers out of the agency's Baltimore-area headquarters the option to relocate to offices in the field. So far, around 2,200 have accepted, the agency has said.

The agency's acting commissioner, Leland Dudek, has broadcast some of the frustrations. Shortly after taking office, he began posting videos of Social Security's regular meetings on YouTube, an apparent effort to make the agency's operations more transparent.

During the meetings, Social Security officials candidly acknowledged that visitors were having trouble using the agency's online portal, My SSA, and were visiting field offices in large numbers because they were "afraid of our systems going down." They also discussed wanting the White House to make a statement to help calm people's fears.

"Can you ask the White House press secretary if she wants to record a blurb and get the message out there?" Mr. Dudek, a midlevel fraud official at the agency who was elevated to be Social Security's temporary chief, asked his staff in a March 28 operational meeting.

That never happened.

Many of the people waiting without appointments outside the Glendale office last week trickled away after getting the printout telling them how to schedule an appointment. But Bonnie Baum, 68, a resident of the sprawling 55-and-older

community Sun City West, decided to stick it out in the hopes of talking to someone.

She said her application for \$1,800 in monthly retirement benefits had been rejected because she did not file the paperwork on time. She had been unable to reach anyone on the phone, and said she had enough difficulty navigating her smartphone, much less Social Security's online system.

"It's just a mess," she said. Then she sat down and waited.

Christina Morales, Mitch Smith and Soumya Karlamangla contributed reporting.

Jack Healy is a Phoenix-based national correspondent who focuses on the fast-changing politics and climate of the Southwest. He has worked in Iraq and Afghanistan and is a graduate of the University of Missouri's journalism school.

Alexandra Berzon is an investigative reporter covering American politics and elections for The Times.

Tara Siegel Bernard writes about personal finance for The Times, from saving for college to paying for retirement and everything in between.

Nicholas Nehamas is a Washington correspondent for The Times, focusing on the Trump administration and its efforts to transform the federal government.

A version of this article appears in print on , Section A, Page 1 of the New York edition with the headline: Social Security Strains as Cuts Take Their Toll

Exhibit G

 An official website of the United States government [Here's how you know](#)

If you need to visit an office, schedule an appointment first. Find out how.

What to Know about Proving Your Identity



[Español](#) [Sign in](#) [Menu](#)

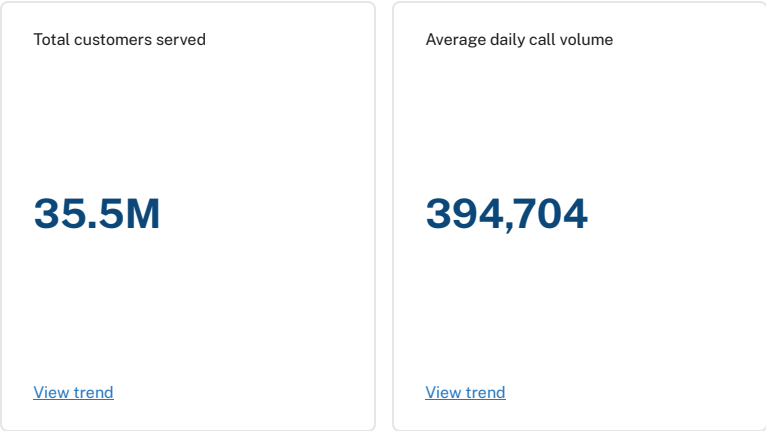
[Home](#) [Social Security performance](#) 800 number performance

800 number performance

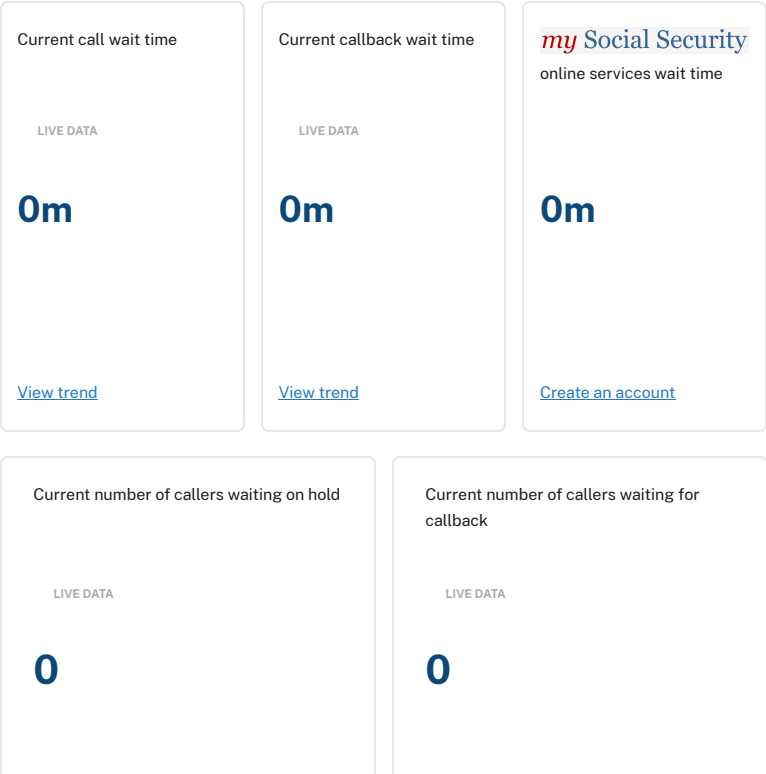
We typically get 80 million calls each year to our national 800 phone number. People call for help with all types of Social Security benefits and services, like updating their personal record and requesting a new card.

Performance at a glance

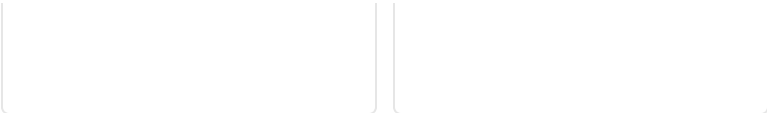
Fiscal year to date (through last completed month)



Current wait times and call volume



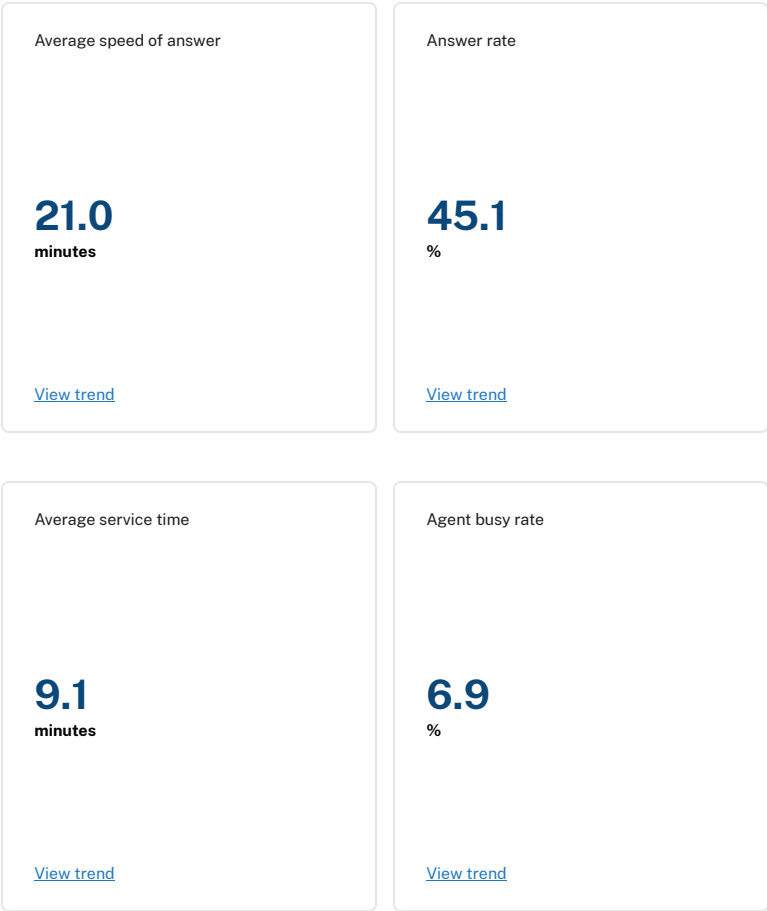
Feedback



The National 800 number is available weekdays between 8am and 7pm, local time. Wait times to speak to a representative are typically shorter in the morning, later in the week, and later in the month. Live data provided on current wait times and volumes are estimated.

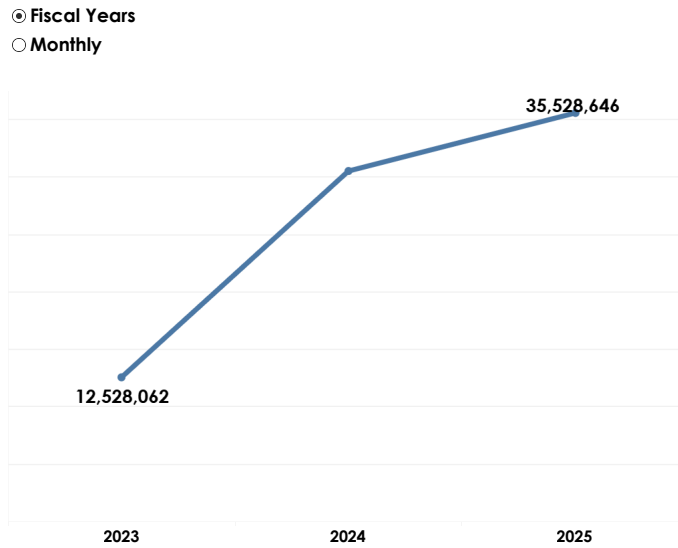
You can use our online services to apply for benefits, check the status of your claim or appeal, request a replacement Social Security card (in many areas), get an instant benefit verification letter, and much more. [Learn more and create your account today.](#)

Service performance, fiscal year to date (through last completed month)



Total customers served trend

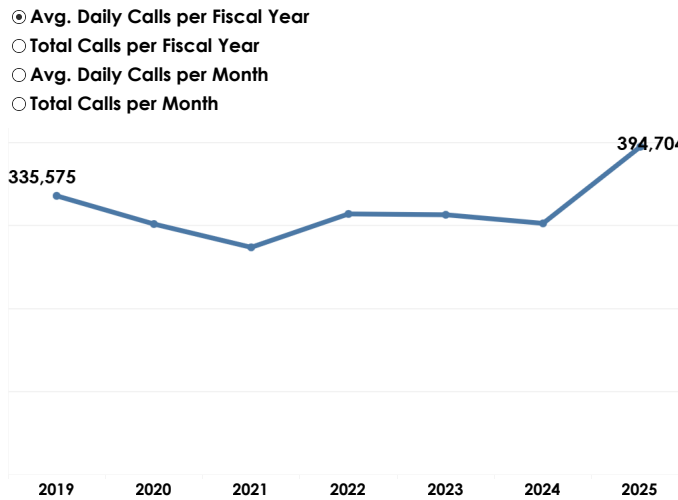
By fiscal year and monthly



This chart shows the number of callers successfully served by either a representative or our automated phone system, by fiscal year and month. The current fiscal year data includes results through the last completed month.

Average daily call volume trend

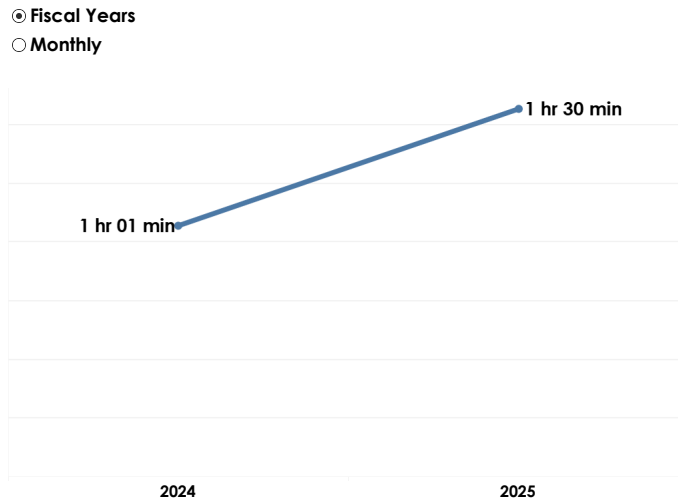
By fiscal year and monthly



This chart shows the average number of daily calls received and total calls received, by fiscal year and month. The current fiscal year data includes results through the last completed month.

Average call wait time trend

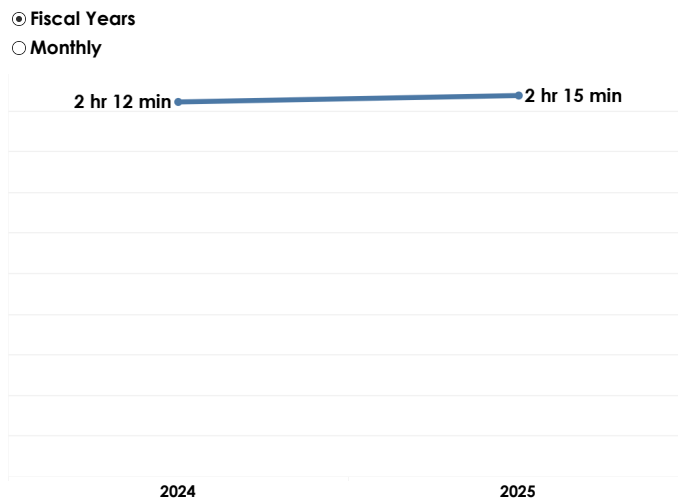
By fiscal year and monthly



This chart shows the average amount of time a caller waited on hold to speak to a representative in English, by fiscal year and month. The current fiscal year data includes results through the last completed month.

Average callback time trend

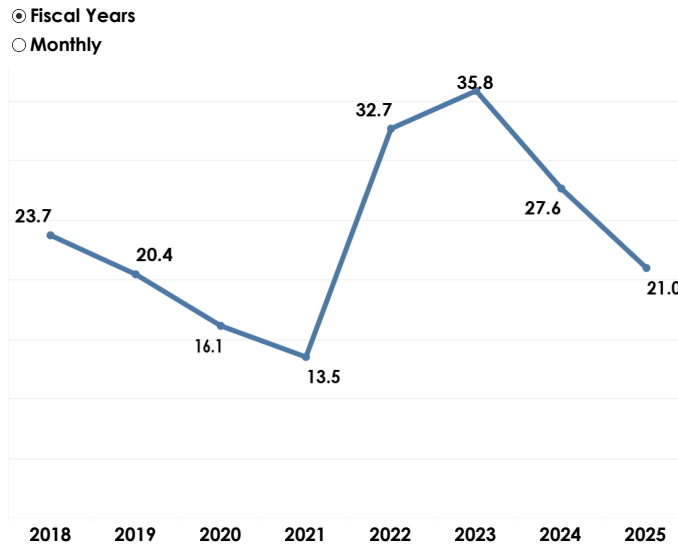
By fiscal year and monthly



This chart shows the average amount of time a caller waited to receive a callback from a representative when selecting the callback option, by fiscal year and month. The current fiscal year data includes results through the last completed month.

Average speed of answer

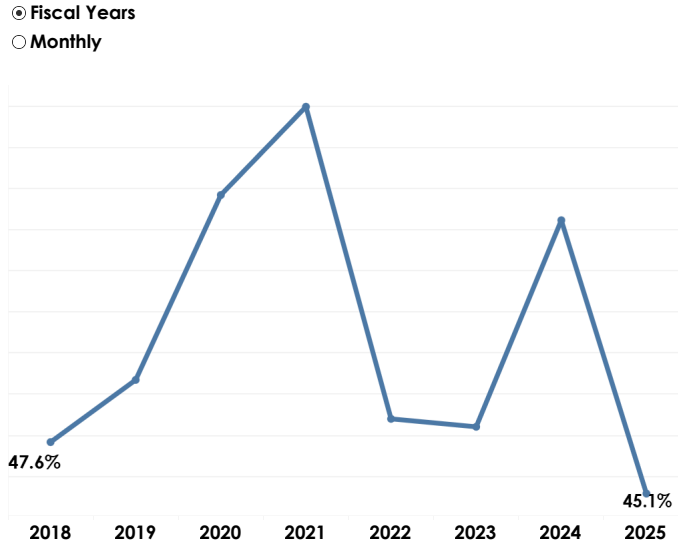
By fiscal year and monthly



This chart shows the average number of minutes customers waited to reach a representative by fiscal year and month. This average includes the wait time to select the callback option and the connection time after the customer receives the callback. The average speed of answer does not include dropped calls and busy signals. Improving the time it takes a representative to answer the phone on our national 800 number is an Agency Priority Goal. The current fiscal year data includes results through the last completed month.

Percentage of callers that reach a representative trend

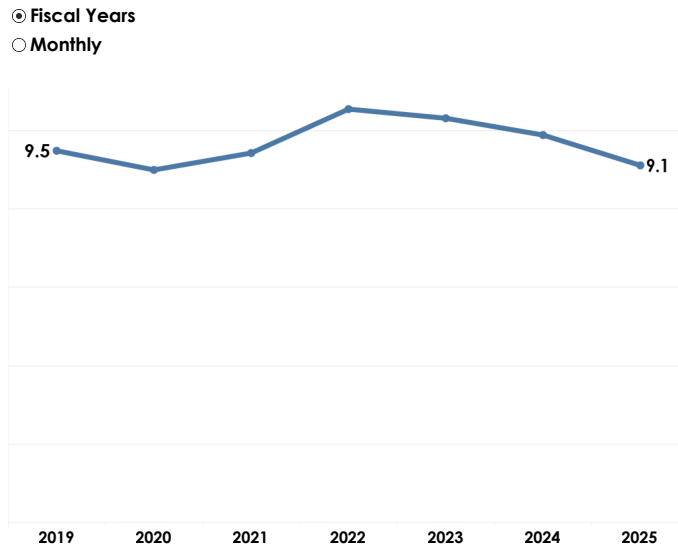
By fiscal year and monthly



This chart shows the percentage of callers that are offered to and then reach a representative, also known as the “answer rate,” by fiscal year and month. The current fiscal year data includes results through the last completed month.

Average service time trend

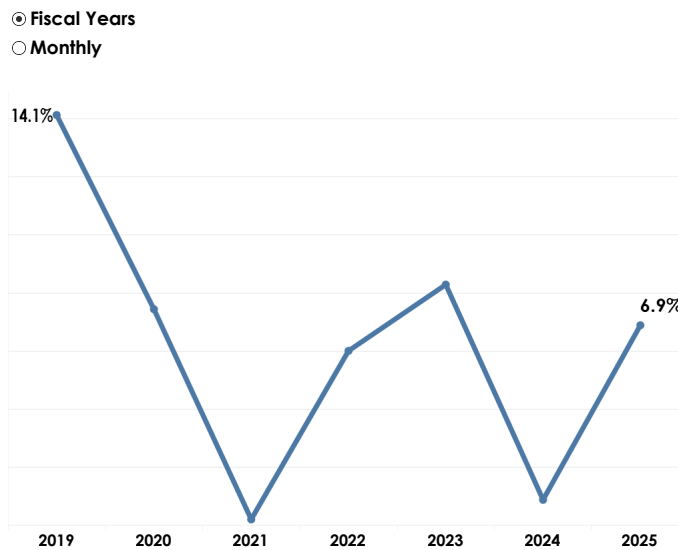
By fiscal year and monthly



This chart shows the average number of minutes it takes for a representative to speak with a caller and complete any required work following the call, also known as “handle time”, by fiscal year and month. The current fiscal year data includes results through the last completed month.

Agent busy rate trend

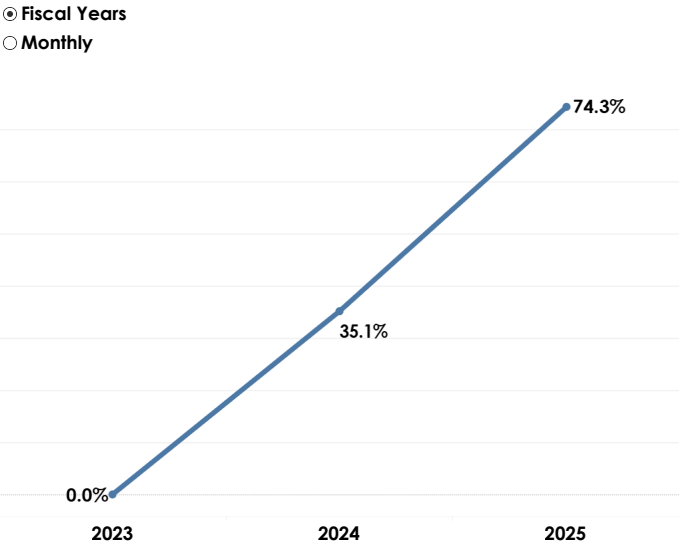
By fiscal year and monthly



This chart shows the percentage of callers that heard a prerecorded disconnect message when trying to reach a representative, by fiscal year and month. The current fiscal year data includes results through the last completed month.

Percentage of calls handled by callback trend

By fiscal year and monthly



Callers have the option of requesting a callback instead of waiting on hold to speak with a representative. This chart shows the percentage of calls handled using this callback option, by fiscal year and month. The current fiscal year data includes results through the last completed month.

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Exhibit H

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[What to Know about Proving Your Identity](#)



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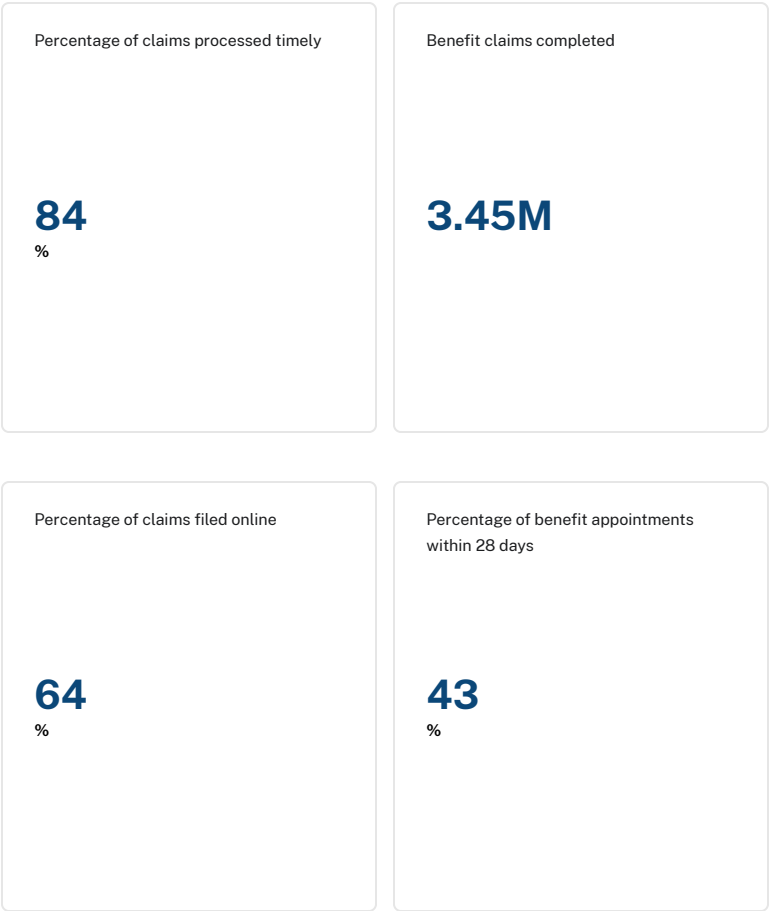
[Home](#) [Social Security performance](#) Processing time for Retirement, Survivor, and Medicare benefits

Processing time for Retirement, Survivor, and Medicare benefits

Each year, we typically sign up over 6 million new customers for the Retirement, Survivor, and Medicare programs. We're committed to ensuring that our customers get their payments or coverage promptly.

Performance at a glance

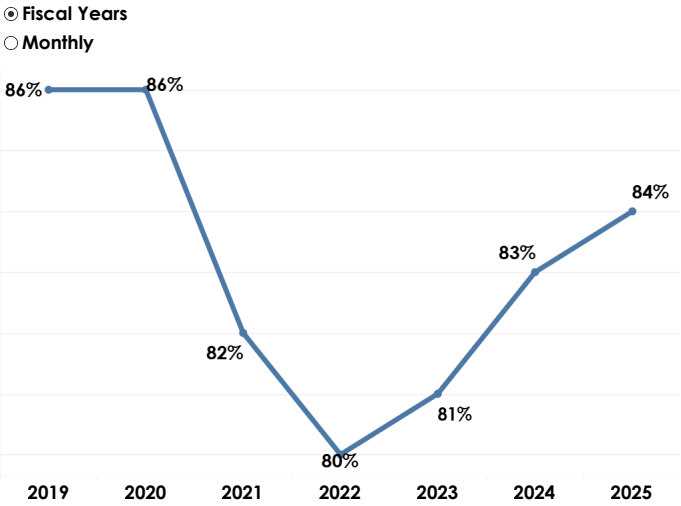
Fiscal year to date (through the last completed month)



Percentage of people receiving benefits on time or within 2 weeks of applying

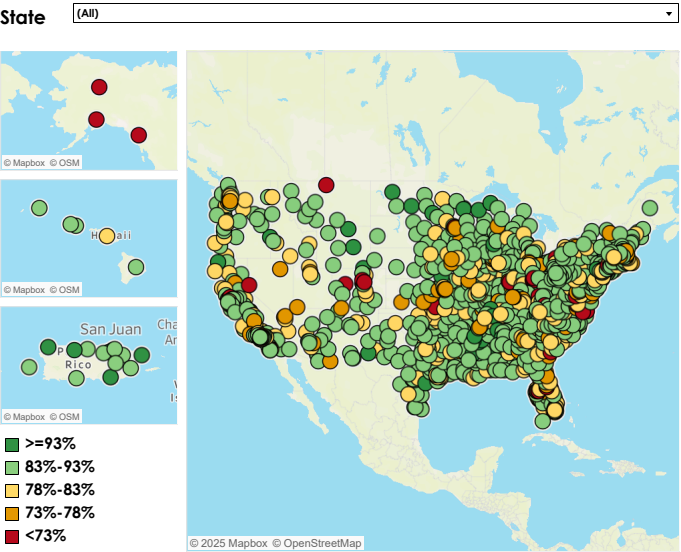
By fiscal year and monthly

Feedback



This chart shows the percentage of on-time receipt of Retirement, Survivor and Medicare benefits, by fiscal year and month. The current fiscal year data includes results through the last completed month.

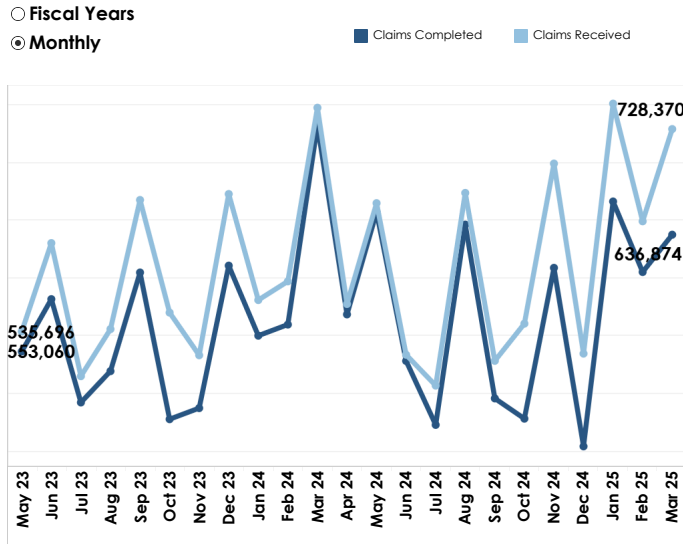
By local field office



This map shows fiscal year to date performance on Retirement, Survivor and Medicare enrollment timeliness for each of our more than 1,200 local field offices.

Benefit claims received and completed

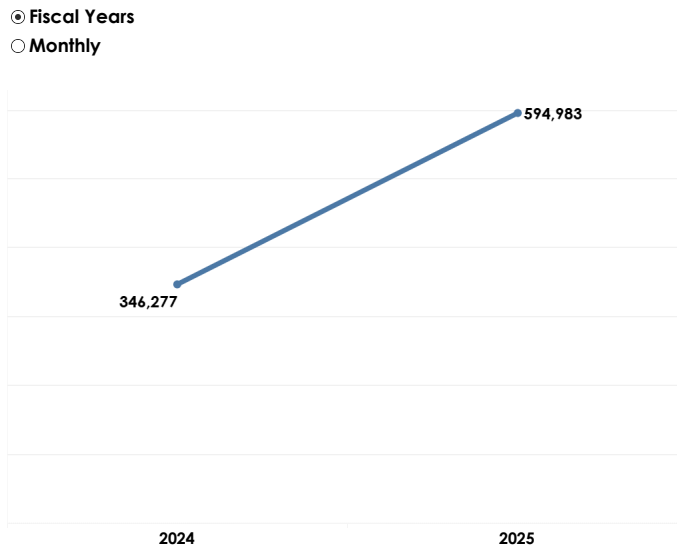
By fiscal year and monthly



This chart shows the number of Retirement, Survivor, and Medicare claims we received and completed, by fiscal year and month. The current fiscal year data includes results through the last completed month.

Benefit claims pending

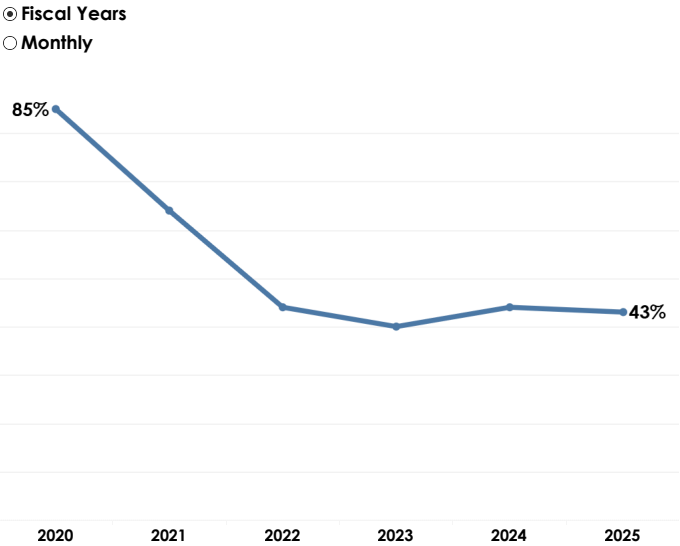
By fiscal year and monthly



This chart shows the number of Retirement, Survivor, and Medicare claims pending, by fiscal year and month. The current fiscal year data includes results through the last completed month.

Percentage of benefit claim appointments scheduled within 28 days

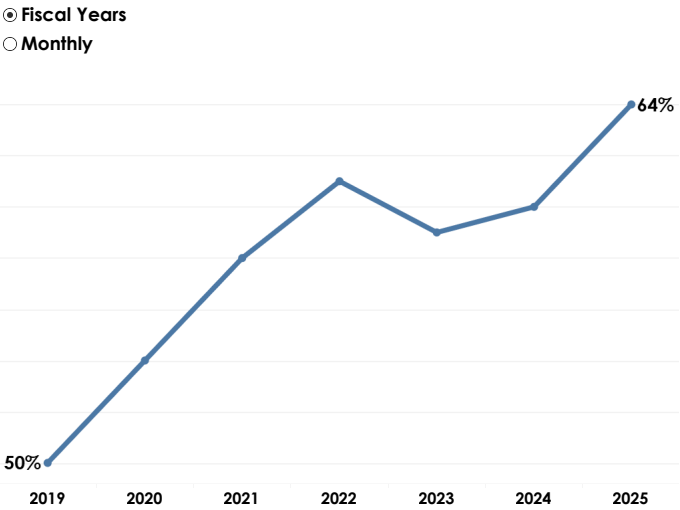
By fiscal year and monthly



This chart shows the percentage of people that scheduled a Retirement, Survivor, or Medicare claims appointment within 28 days either by phone or in person, by fiscal year and month. The current fiscal year data includes results through the last completed month.

Percentage of claims filed online

By fiscal year and monthly



This chart shows the percentage of people that filed a Retirement, Survivor, or Medicare claim online, by fiscal year and month. The current fiscal year data includes results through the last completed month.

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Disability determination processing time

Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income ("disability") benefits provide essential income for people with disabilities. We carefully review medical and work history to determine if someone's eligible for disability benefits.

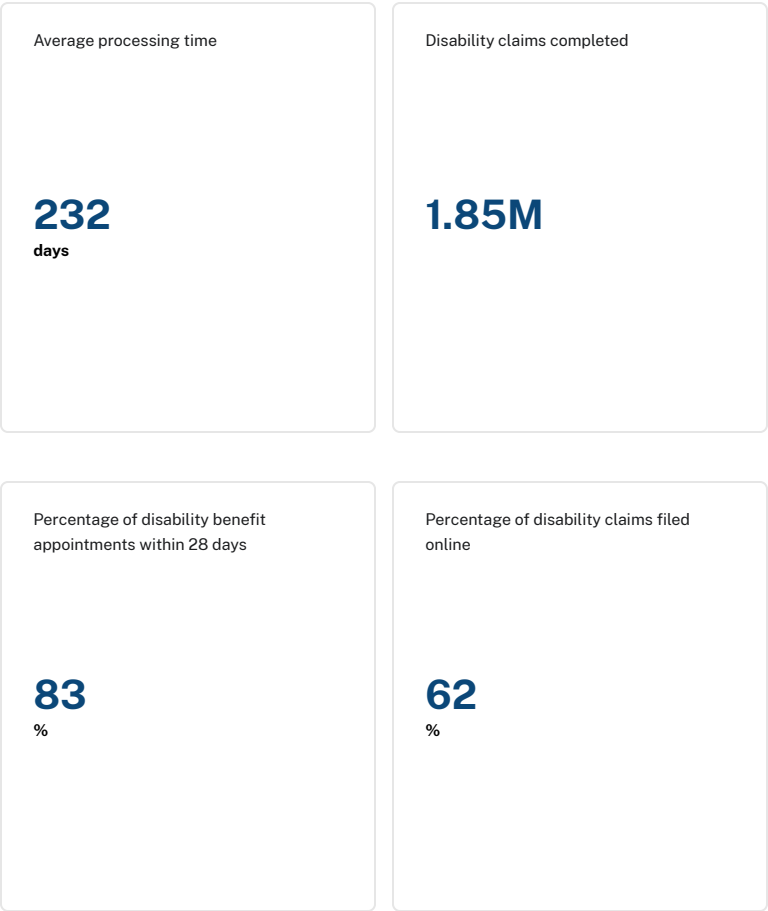
There are 3 major steps in the initial disability claims process:

- Step 1: Field office checks to see if the customer meets basic non-medical requirements.
- Step 2: State Disability Determination Services (DDS) checks to see if the customer's medical condition meets the disability requirements.
- Step 3: Field office approves or denies the claim and issues the decision letter.

The first and third steps occur at our field offices. The second and more detailed step occurs at the state level. Every state operates a DDS office funded by Social Security.

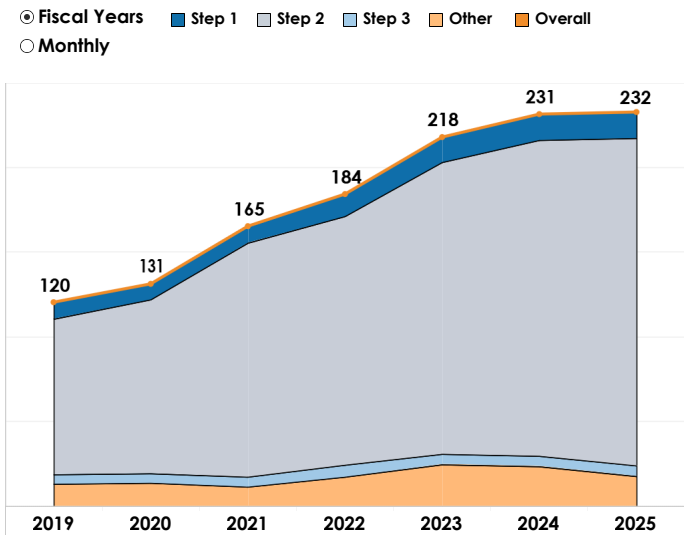
Performance at a glance

Fiscal year to date (through the last completed month)



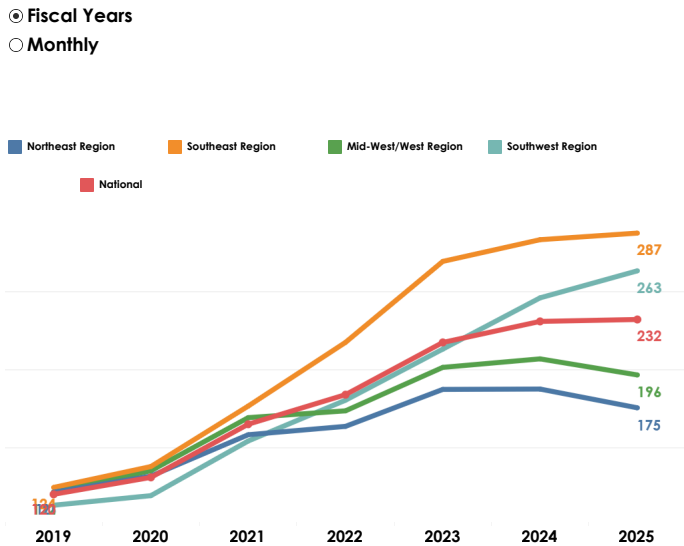
Disability determination average processing times

By fiscal year and monthly



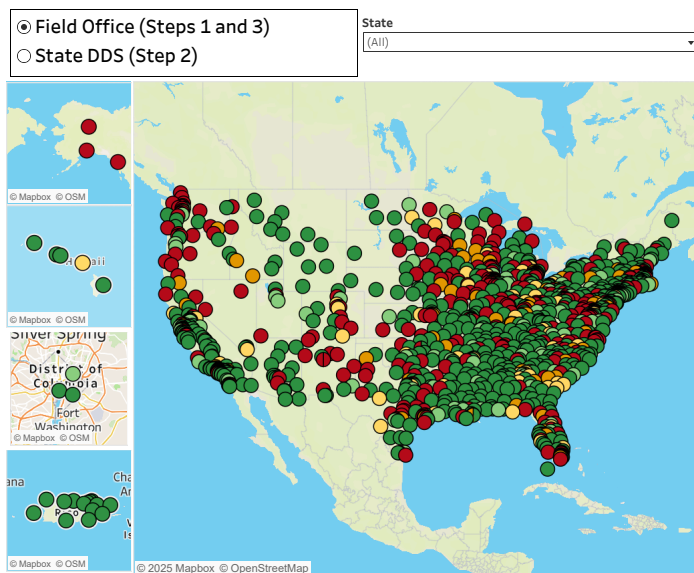
This chart shows the average number of days it's taken to process disability applications, by fiscal year and month. "Other" includes the average amount of time per claim spent in other steps within the application process that are not captured in steps 1, 2, and 3, such as quality review or transit time. Average processing times increased in fiscal year 2024, in part because we focused on claims from individuals who have waited the longest for a disability decision. Improving the time it takes a customer to receive an initial disability determination is also an Agency Priority Goal.

National and regional average processing times, monthly



This chart shows the monthly average number of days to process disability applications, by region, and the national monthly average processing time. Our Office of Operations is comprised of four regions that manage frontline services at SSA offices and support the DDSs. Every region is comprised of multiple states.

Field office processing times (Steps 1 and 3) and state DDS processing times (Step 2)



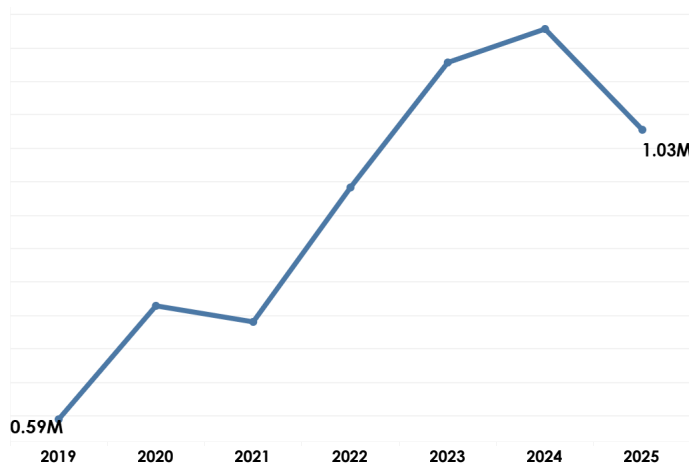
This map shows the average number of days it's taken field offices or state DDS to perform this work so far this fiscal year.

The time it takes to process disability claims varies from state to state due to a variety of circumstances, like differences in staffing.

Initial disability determinations pending

By fiscal year and monthly

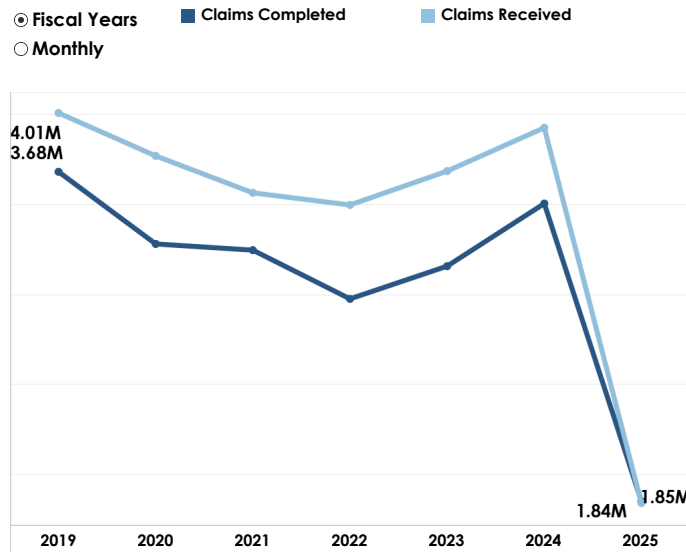
- ☒ Fiscal Years
☐ Monthly



This chart shows the number of initial disability determinations pending in the state DDS, by fiscal year and month. Disability determinations are step 2 in the disability claims process. The current fiscal year data includes results through the last completed month.

Initial disability claims received and completed

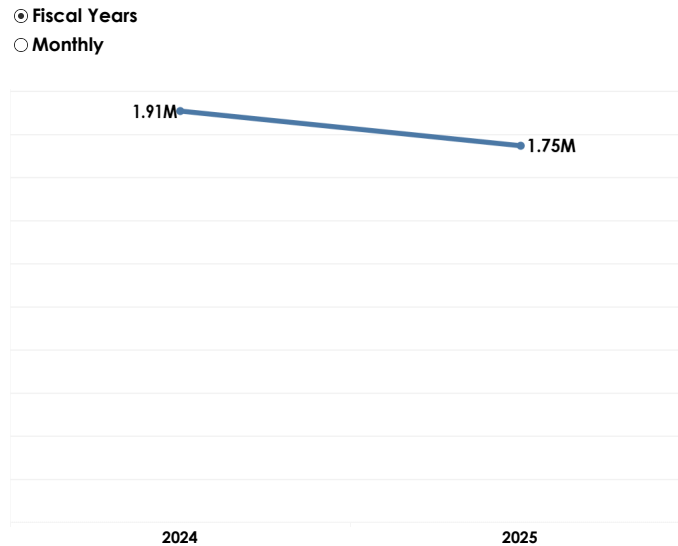
By fiscal year and monthly



This chart shows the number of initial disability claims we received and completed, by fiscal year and month. The current fiscal year data includes results through the last completed month.

Initial disability claims pending

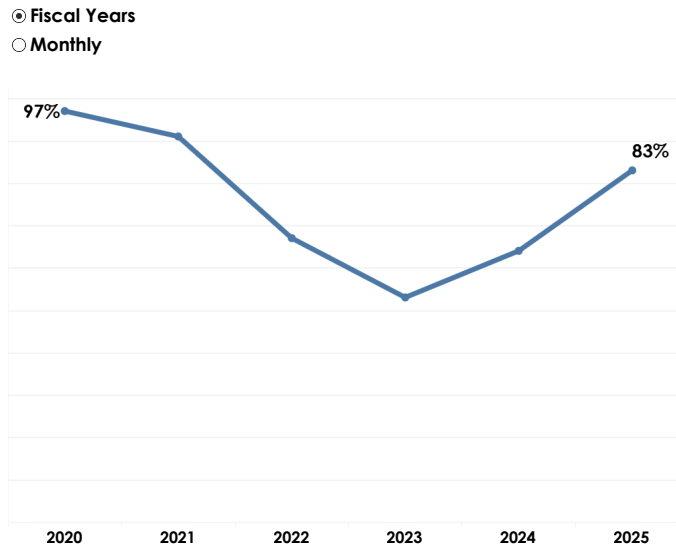
By fiscal year and monthly



This chart shows the total number of initial disability claims pending, by fiscal year and month. This includes claims pending in the state DDS (step 2) and in the local field office (steps 1 and 3). This also includes disability claims that do not require a disability determination, such as claims for the spouse or child of a disability beneficiary. The current fiscal year data includes results through the last completed month.

Percentage of disability claim appointments scheduled within 28 days

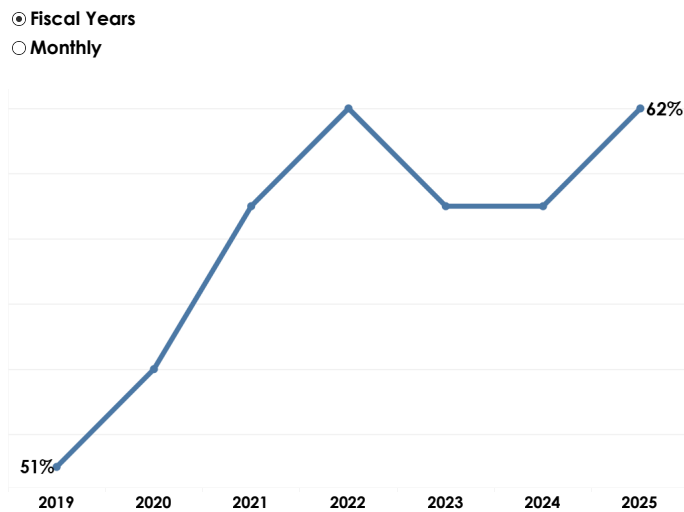
By fiscal year and monthly



This chart shows the percentage of people that scheduled a disability claim appointment within 28 days, either by phone or in person, by fiscal year and month. The current fiscal year data includes results through the last completed month.

Percentage of disability claims filed online

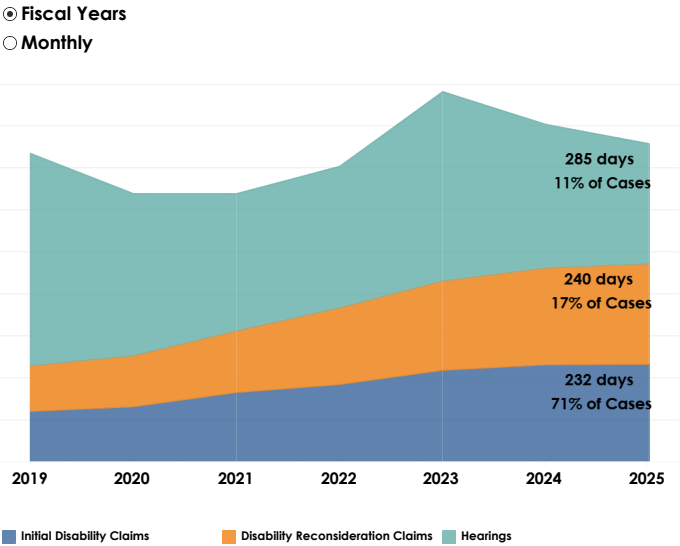
By fiscal year and monthly



This chart shows the percentage of people that filed a disability claim online, by fiscal year and month. The current fiscal year data includes results through the last completed month.

Disability processing times and percentage of cases processed at initial, reconsideration, and hearings levels

By fiscal year and monthly



This chart provides a snapshot on how many days on average our customers waited for either an initial disability, reconsideration or hearing decision, by fiscal year and month. It also provides the percentage of cases that were processed at each level, by fiscal year and month. Not all disability claims go through the reconsideration or hearings appeal levels. For more information on the appeals process, see [Your Right to Appeal the Decision Made on Your Claim](#).

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Exhibit J

From: ^Human Resources Internal Communications <Human.Resources.Internal.Communications@ssa.gov>
Sent: Monday, April 21, 2025 4:48 PM
Subject: Deferred Retirement/Resignation Program - Second Chance - Open Until April 25 at Noon

A Message to All SSA Employees

Subject: Deferred Retirement/Resignation Program – Second Chance - Open Until April 25 at Noon

On January 28, 2025, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management sent an email to federal employees presenting a deferred resignation offer. That offer closed February 12, 2025.

We are presenting another opportunity for HQ employees in a non-mission critical position to voluntarily separate by way of deferred retirement or resignation through the Deferred Retirement/Resignation Program – Second Chance (DRP2). Only Headquarters employees in a non-mission critical position are eligible for DRP2. If you've agreed to a voluntary reassignment offer to a mission critical position, you are ineligible for DRP2. Employees participating in DRP2 will begin paid administrative leave on May 5, 2025, and must separate from the agency by September 30, 2025.

How to Apply

To be considered for DRP2, you must complete and submit the electronic sign-up form **by Friday, April 25, 2025 at Noon EDT**.

[Sign Up Here: Deferred Retirement/Resignation Program – Second Chance](#)

The Office of Human Resources will review submissions and determine eligibility. If you are found eligible, you will receive a DRP2 agreement that must be signed and submitted **by April 28, 2025 at 5 PM EDT**.

Key Benefits of DRP 2

- Paid administrative leave beginning on May 5, 2025.
- Continued government pay and benefits through September 30, 2025, without any expectation of performing work beyond May 5, 2005.
- Assurance of exemption from any future agency reductions-in-force (RIF).

Please visit <https://www.opm.gov/fork> for additional information. Although OPM's DRP is closed, the information in the Original Email to Employees and Frequently Asked Questions may be helpful. **Employees participating in DRP2 may not extend their separation date beyond September 30, 2025.**

Exhibit K

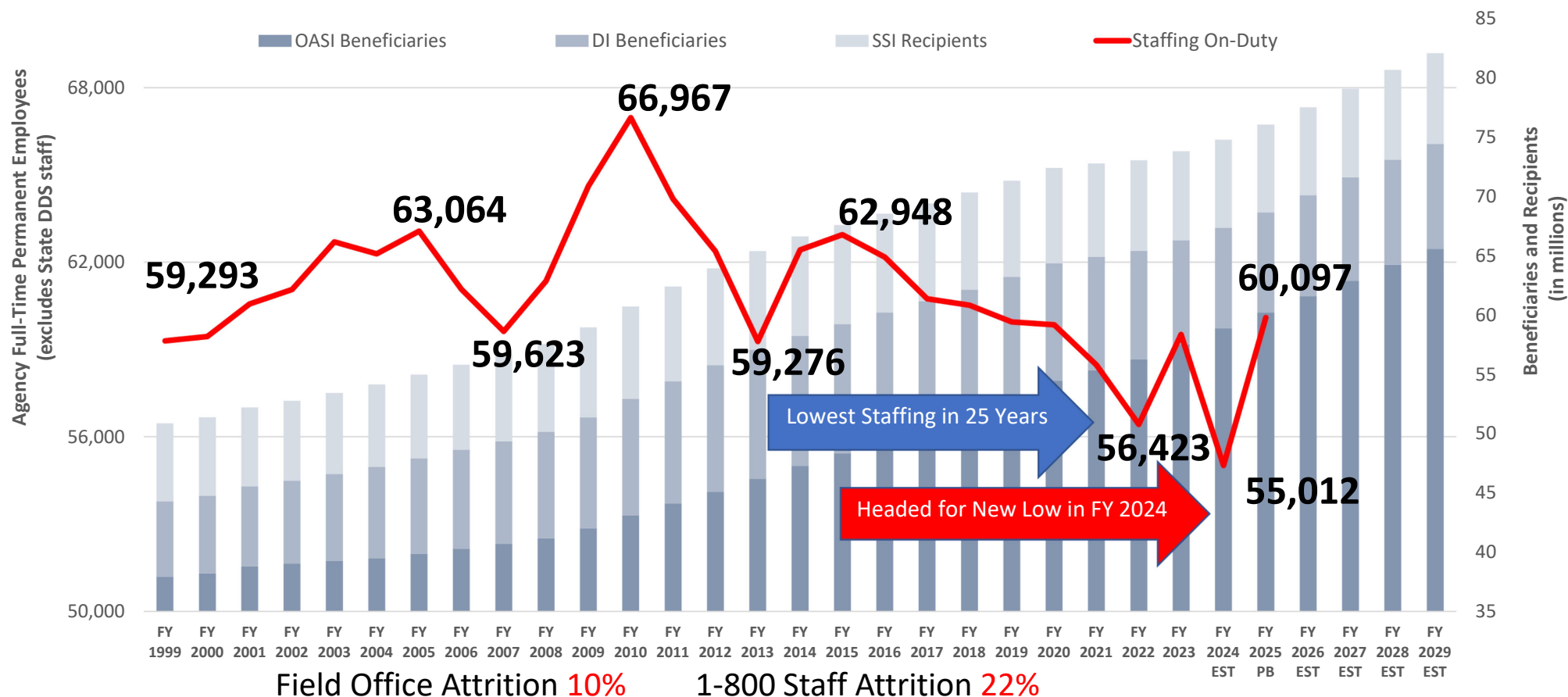


Securing today
and tomorrow

A Path to Improve Customer Service Today and into the Future

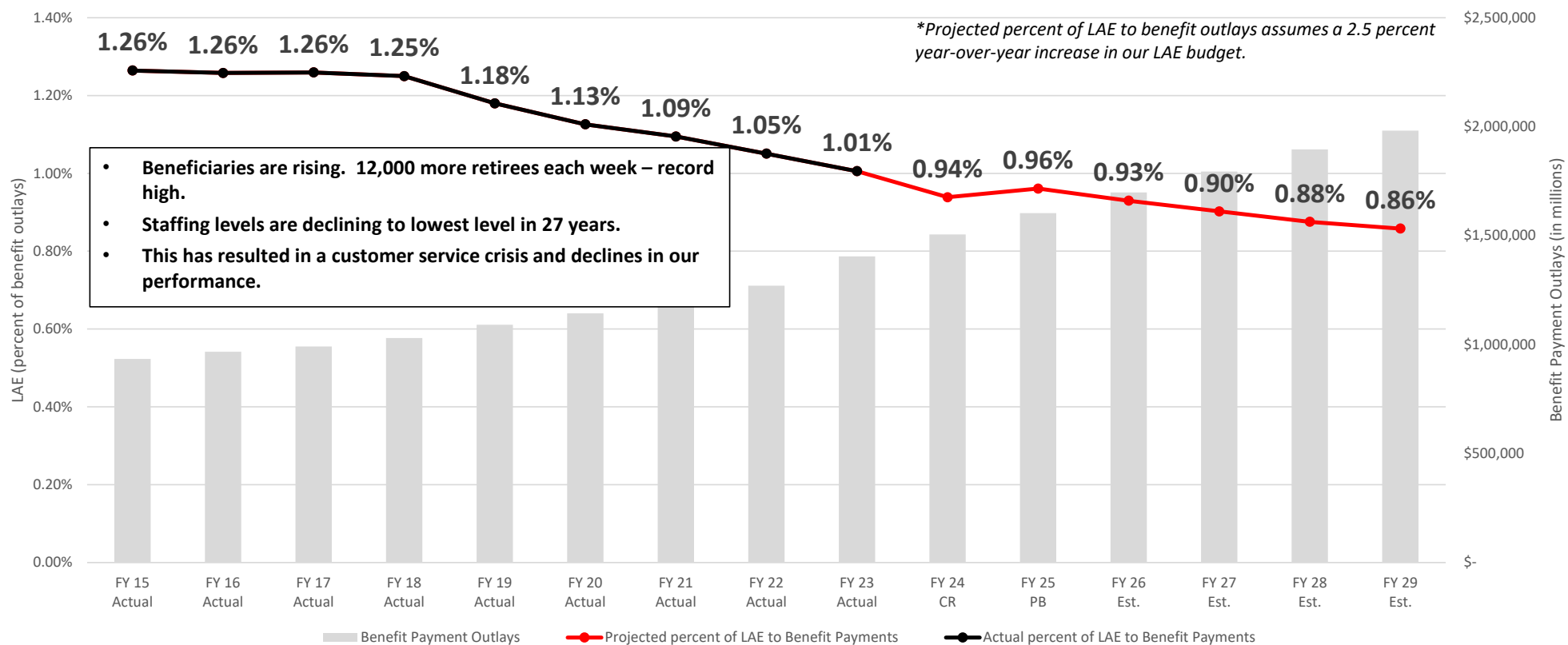
March 2024

Staffing Declines As Beneficiaries Rise



Administrative Funding Declining as % of Benefit Outlays

SSA Limitation on Administrative Expense (LAE) as a Percent of Benefit Outlays



Where we are now (through February):

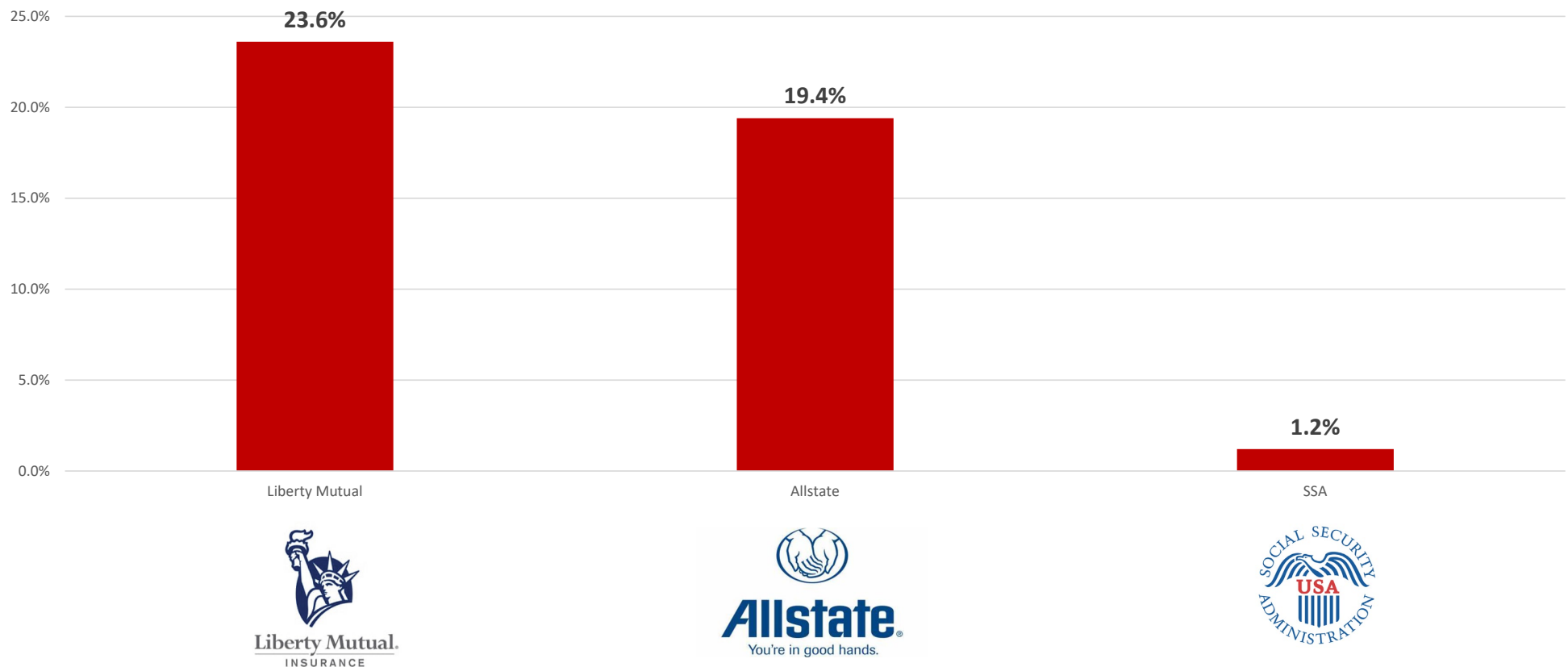
Wait Time on our 1-800 Number
38 minutes

Wait Time for an Initial Disability /Reconsideration Decision
228 days/223 days

Wait Time for a Hearing Decision
365 days

We are still far more efficient than private insurance companies in admin expenses

■ Percent of Administrative Expense to Benefit Outlays



Customer Service Outcomes with Funding at 1.2% of Benefit Outlays

Where we are now (FYTD Feb.):

Wait Time on our 1-800 Number
38 minutes

Wait Time for an Initial Disability
/Reconsideration Decision
228 days/223 days

Wait Time for a Hearing Decision
365 days

1.2%

1.2%

1.2%

Where we can go (long-term goals):

Wait Time on our 1-800 Number
5 minutes

Wait Time for an Initial Disability
/Reconsideration Decision
120 days/120 days

Wait Time for a Hearing Decision
270 days

Driving Change, Leading from the Front Lines

- Announced a plan to increase our onsite presence beginning in April.
- Hired new Chief Operating Officer, Chief Information Officer, and General Counsel.
- Conducted 10 town halls throughout the country; over 2,000 employees present.
- Launched SecuritySTAT on February 5 – a cross-cutting performance management program – to accelerate the deployment of a host of customer service improvements.

